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ABSTRACT

This conference proceedings reflects the substance of the 3-day Conference on Written Communication, sponsored by the Ohio Department of Education and designed to provide professional growth opportunities for more than 350 school administrators, teachers, and university and state department personnel. The papers in the proceedings present a review of current theory and research and provide suggestions for practical application. Papers in the proceedings are: "Can Children Plan?" (Marlene Scardamalia); "Assessment of the Chicago Area Writing Project" (Betty Jane Wagner); "Stories: A Prelude to Writing" (Victor M. Rentel); "Children's Literature: An Impetus to Composition" (John Warren Stewig); "The Ohio Writing Project: Training Professional Teachers of Writing" (Mary Hayes); "WRITING-into, out of, beyond LITERATURE" (Nancy Kersell); "Ohio Writing Project Community Based Writing" (E. Ann Johnson); "Revise before Editing" (Paul Eschholz); "'Skills'--Do They Exist?" (John Downing); "Contexts for Writing" (Martha L. King); "The Process of Writing" (Christine San Jose); "Business Writing: Observations and Implications for Teaching Composition" (Lee Odell); "Early Development into Writing: Observing and Responding to Children's Language Behavior" (Barbara S. Pettegrew and Christine C. Pappas); "Using Children's Literature as a Springboard to Writing" (Mary Lou White); "Reading, Writing, and Thinking in Secondary Schools" (T. Stevenson Hansell); and "Rewriting Prewriting" (Kevin C. McHugh). The agenda for the conference is attached. (RS)

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Dissemination Report

UNDERSTANDING WRITING— Process, Skill and Product

Ohio Department of Education
Columbus, 1983

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INTRODUCTION

Some of the most rewarding responsibilities with the Department of Education are to create concepts and in turn to design effective staff development programs and statewide conferences around these concepts in a constant effort to improve education in Ohio's schools. The Conference on Written Communication was designed to provide professional growth opportunities for more than 350 school administrators, teachers, and university and state department personnel.

The concept of a conference on written communication was focused upon a research base with practical application at all grade levels. The Ohio Young Author Project had proven extremely successful in the area of creative composition. The obvious strong interrelationship between creative composition and functional writing skills, along with the sense of need and aroused interest by Ohio teachers, led to conference development.

In order to give adequate emphasis to the special needs of both elementary and secondary education, a three-day conference was organized. The conference agenda, included in the appendix, reflects careful planning with the research and rationale, application at all levels, on the second day; practical application at the elementary level on the first day; and practical application at the secondary level on the third day.

This publication reflects the substance of the Conference on Written Communication. The conference was sponsored by the Ohio Department of Education, Office of Inservice Education, and held in Columbus, Ohio, March 30 through April 1, 1981.

The objectives of the conference were as follows: to provide for broadening the base of writing instruction in the curriculum; to present a review of recent research in the language arts and implications for the teaching of writing; to explore the many contexts for motivating writing experiences; to demonstrate practical classroom stragegies for developing the expressive and receptive elements of language arts in teaching writing; to identify a variety of resources useful in teaching communication skills as they relate to writing; and to provide direct experiences in the process and assessment of functional and creative writing.

The Ohio Department of Education's leadership, noting the high quality of the international speakers and the timeliness of the topic, recognized the conference as a classic. The state superintendent's office recommended this publication to be developed in order to disseminate the conference content and message to the national and international education public.

It is hoped that the report serves to provide a repertoire of notions, models and resources. The papers, which span elementary through secondary levels, present a review of current theory and research and provide suggestions for practical application. The ideas presented should be particularly helpful to those responsible for cirriculum design and the inservice training of educational personnel.

The Ohio Department of Education acknowledges those conference presenters who were able to contribute papers making this publication possible.

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Theory and Research in the Writing Process

General Sessions

Can Children Plan?—Marlene Scardamalia

By the time children have reached elementary school, most are well able to use the common "genres" of conversational speech: modes such as question-answer, request-compliance, argument, topic-commentary, and anecdote narration (Fine, 1978; Garvey, 1975; Menig-Peterson & McCabe, 1978). Written composition uses these same modes, with one main difference: conversation moves through external feedback, whereas writing is autonomous. In writing, discourse must be generated without support from a conversational partner.

The discourse skills that children develop in the preschool years (Bruner, 1975; Keenan & Schieffelin, 1976; Lewis & Freedle, 1973) are, we believe, highly dependent on the participation of a conversational partner. For this reason, when children enter school they must relearn the enormous complex of discourse skills in order to master written composition. We believe that one of the major challenges faced by young writers in rebuilding their language production system is to develop a new way of sustaining thought—so that, rather than depending on external inputs, the impetus for a next thought is internally motivated.

Beyond the question of how writers sustain production without conversational input lies the question of how reflective thought is incorporated into their text planning. To illustrate what we mean by reflective thought, let us take an example from conversational discourse. We wish to distinguish between two types of thought, that which might be generated in a discussion of an issue, and thought that resembles small talk.

In the former case, we imagine two people dealing with contrasting positions for which they are attempting to develop some synthesis, and in the latter conversationlists who side-step contentious issues, either through active avoidance or through effort to maintain the current line of conversation.

Initiating Statement

"But that's not always true."

Discussion

"Well, I wonder what makes the difference in when it is true and when it isn't true."
"I wonder what the limiting conditions are."
"I guess that's right; maybe a more accurate statement would be..."

Small Talk

"Well, it is true when..."
"I still think..."
"Well, anyway..."

Table 1 illustrates the different types of thinking associated with discussion and small talk modes of discourse. On the left is the conversational input that initiates a response. In the box in the upper right hand corner are the responses associated with a discussion mode response, and in the lower right hand corner are those responses associated with a small talk mode.

Consider first the discussion mode. The response to "But that's not always true" is "Well, I wonder what makes the difference in when it is true and when it isn't true." The responder has clearly acknowledged the presence of a problem, and uses the query about the correctness of some statement as inspiration to work out limiting conditions for the acceptability of that idea.

This response, like the other responses indicated for the discussion mode, shows a reaction destined to engage the responder in more thorough and complex analysis of the issue under debate. Such analysis might well result in an altered opinion on the issue.

Consider now the small talk mode. The response here to "But that's not always true" is "Well, it is true when ...." Such a response allows the responder to continue to discuss the issue within the same framework as existed before the query was posed.

Table 1

Responses associated with discussion and small talk modes of discourse

Marlene Scardamalia is Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, York University, Downsview, Ontario, Canada.

Through maneuvers such as those indicated in the small talk mode, the responder can avoid delving deeper into the issue at hand.

Examining these two modes of discourse allows one to see that responders possess effective conversational strategies whereby they can either use problems to redirect and refine their thinking, or bypass the problem and continue as before.

Analysis of protocols in which proficient adult writers think aloud while planning a composition indicates that proficient writers possess strategies similar to the conversational ones discussed above. Table 2 indicates kinds of statements these writers make in the course of planning their compositions. Reflective statements resemble those associated with the discussion mode, and "go-on" statements have, as their parallel, the small talk mode.

Table 2

Reflective and Go-On phrases used while planning compositions

Reflective Phrases

A whole new way to think of this topic is...
This isn't very convincing because...
A criticism that I should deal with in my paper is...
A good point on the other side of the argument is...
But many readers won't agree that...
No one will have thought of...
An important point I haven't considered yet is...
A topic sentence that would show I'm a serious thinker is...
If I want to start off with my strongest idea...

Go-On Phrases

My main idea...
This will lead to...
Another idea that's good is...
I could explain this better by...
What I like...
Not only that, but...
This could make readers...
I'll change that a little by...
Readers would like...
I don't have enough ideas so...

It must be emphasized that a proficient writer will utilize both reflective and go-on thinking. Go-on thoughts, as the name suggests, are necessary for writing to continue at all. Reflective thoughts allow for modification of what is written.

Young children, in contrast to proficient adult writers, do not demonstrate much of the kind of planning implied by the use of phrases in Table 2 (Scardamalia, Bereiter, Woodruff, Burtis & Turkish, 1981). This has led us to wonder what would happen if children had to use, in planning their compositions, the kinds of statements found in the protocols of proficient adult writers. It is conceivable that such statements are not found in the children's think-aloud protocols because young children cannot construct responses to such statements, let alone think of the statements in the first place.

Accordingly, we have begun conducting experiments in an effort to get a picture of what, in this respect, children can and cannot do. Our aim in this is to provide children with tools to aid them in planning their compositions, and to induce them to incorporate more reflective thinking into their planning.

The experiments proceed as follows. We print sentence openers of both the reflective and go-on types on index cards and then model, with the assistance of the child, the process the child will be asked to go through in a subsequent session.

The adult begins thinking aloud, much as would be the case for any composition planned out aloud. In the meantime, the child sits beside the adult with cards in hand, instructed to help the adult by selecting sentence openers to hand to the adult when he or she needs help thinking of what to say next. Thus the child must monitor the adult's thinking while searching through the deck of cards in an effort to select a card appropriate to the kind of thinking the adult is currently engaged in.

The help children are capable of offering adults is impressive. Even quite young children (eight years) search the deck of cards with care. They frequently manage to select cards of the sort the adult might pick were he or she doing the choosing. Results to date suggest that a reasonable expectation from the use of cards in this manner—with the child delivering them rather than responding to them—is that such activity would lead to significant advances in children's ability to monitor idea developlment and to engage in critical analysis of ideas.

Our motivating interest, however, was to see if children could use these sentence openers in

Table 3 **Planning protocol generated in response to the question "Should children be able to choose the subjects they study in school?"**

I think children should choose their own subjects in school because sometimes children get bored with the subject they've been doing. If they get bored they won't try hard.	
And if they had a chance to choose their own subjects maybe they could have a better relationship with their teacher and maybe then it would be a little easier to teach the children. Now as we go along we might find there are a few problems because children would be choosing the one subject they like best all the time and so they wouldn't get much done because they'd always choose one subject and not the others. That means they wouldn't be very good at other subjects. Maybe they should only be able to choose their own subjects in the morning or maybe in the afternoon. Or maybe the first time that they are able to choose their own subjects they should choose their favorite, then their second favorite, then their third favorite, and so on. But then again it is the teacher's classroom so they should be able to teach the way they want to. As long as the principal, the people running the school, the board of education and the students' parents agree with the way they are teaching. If they think it is a good idea to let kids have a day or two they should do that but if they don't it is all right because it is their classroom and they should be able to teach the way they want.	Another idea that is good is . . . An important point I haven't considered yet is . . . No one will have thought of . . . A good point on the other side of the argument is . . .

planning their own writing. Therefore, we switched roles with the children. Now they planned and we handed them the cards.

A protocol generated with the use of the cards is presented in Table 3 to give the reader some feel for how children handle the task. The example is from a bright grade-three student using the cards for the first time.

The first part of this protocol (above the line) was the content generated spontaneously. This portion, taken by itself, resembles the essays generated on similar topics by children in the eight-to-ten age range. There is a statement of opinion, a reason, and some elaboration of the reason (Scardamalia, Bereiter, & Goelman, in press).

The content below the line was generated in response to the cards presented at points where the child fell silent. The cards presented are indicated in the column to the right. This portion contains far more varied and extended thought than we have previously found in either the essays or the planning protocols of children this young.

What is clear from the results to date is that children lack neither the content nor the analytic

skills needed to use planning statements of the kinds experts use. Further, they find the procedure an enjoyable one and seem proud of the thinking they produce as a result.

The work reported in this paper is supported by grants from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, the Alfred B. Sloan Foundation and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

This paper, presented by Marlene Scardamalia, was co-authored by Carl Bereiter.

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Assessment of the Chicago Area Writing Project— Betty Jane Wagner

The Chicago Area Writing Project has just completed an assessment of student writing that has shown significance for the Project group at a gratifying .001 level. The results of this study provide the data for the application for validation, currently in the hands of the Illinois Title IV, ESEA, Part C evaluators. With validation may come funding through the Illinois State Board of Education to take the Chicago Area Writing Project to other school districts throughout the state. Like directors of other writing projects around the country, we knew that the experience teachers have in a summer institute profoundly changes what happens in their classrooms, but finding a way to demonstrate this phenomenon has not been easy.

Like other writing projects, we held a five-week summer institute for selected teachers during which participants wrote a great deal, shared and discussed their writing in small groups, reflected on, analyzed, and mapped the writing process, compared their experience with research studies and current writing theories, discussed implications for effective teaching, and generated strategies for the classroom. They gave presentations appropriate for inservice work with other teachers and planned workshop sessions to present to their colleagues during the school year. Participants were teachers of all grade levels from one through twelve in 18 schools in six widely different school districts.

Our goal was to set up a research design that would validly test writing and yet be simple enough to be carried out within our budget. We wanted, however, to do more than just look at how teacher behavior had changed: we wanted to know if students were actually writing better because of our teacher training. To find out, we had students write a story as a pre-test and again as a post-test, and we holistically evaluated their writing samples, using the primary trait scoring system.

Our evaluation showed that students whose teachers had been trained in our summer institute made twice as much progress as those in control schools. Our testing instrument and scoring system was used by the National Assessment of Educational Progress in each of their three writing evaluations. As far as we know, we are the first to use a NAEP instrument in a pre- and post-testing of the same students.

Our research design is a traditional experimental-control one, a variation of the Solomon Four-Group Design. We compared the progress from fall to spring (or fall to January in the case of one-semester classes) of students whose teachers participated in the institute (T1) with a control group of students whose teachers had not (T2). A random sample of students of the 31 teacher participants from six Chicago area school districts was compared with a random sample of students of 24 matching teachers chosen from control schools. Control school selection was based on matching the overall characteristics of school communities using criteria NAEP followed for community-type classification. Empirical data showing equivalency of schools also took into account racial-ethnic breakdown and profiles of standardized test scores. High school matching considered the number of students continuing their education after graduation. Equivalency was also shown by comparing teacher attitudes on a random sample of teacher questionnaires. Because the teachers selected as participants could not be considered representative of the total teacher population of the six participating districts, control teacher selection was made on the basis of responses to questionnaires, matching according to the following criteria:

- —public or private school teacher
- —grade level taught (elementary, junior high, high school)
- —primary subject area taught
- —attitude toward writing
- —amount of writing assigned to students
- —willingness to participate in a summer institute on teaching writing

The problem posed by the need to match teachers worried us because it seemed we would be comparing the performance of students of excellent teachers with the performance of those of other excellent teachers, and the differences between them might be too subtle to be measured with available testing instruments. As it turned out, the single variable of a teacher's experience in a summer institute made a significant difference in the quality of the writing of students.

Because we were interested in helping students write in ways demanded by real-life situations, we chose a writing test that could be evaluated holistically rather than one that assessed editing skills in isolation. Standardized tests of usage or mechanics distort what we wanted to measure.

Betty Jane Wagner is Co-Director of the Chicago Writing Project, National College of Education, Evanston, Illinois.

Research has shown that high-level performance on tests of isolated mechanical skills does not necessarily correlate well with competence in writing. (See, for example, Roger A. McCaig's study of fourth graders reported in "What your Director of Instruction Needs to Know about Standardized English Tests," *Language Arts*, May 1977, pages 491-496.)

After consultation with Jack Schmidt, Ina Mullis, and Rexford Brown at the office of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, we chose the Stork Expressive test, one that we felt was adaptable for use across all grade levels, from one through twelve. As a writing prompt, the instrument consisted of a copy of a photograph of a strange-looking stork and a set of directions, which were read aloud as the students followed along. Here are the directions:

Look at the picture printed on the opposite page for a while, and then make up a story about it. When you are ready, write your story. It may be helpful for you to start with one of the following lines, but you may begin in any way you wish.

Possible First Lines

"I'm telling you, Henry, if you don't get rid of that thing, it's going to eat up the cat!"

"But, Mother, I *am* telling the truth! It laid an egg in the Chevy."

"Last night a very odd-looking bird appeared in the neighborhood."

Student writing samples were scored using the primary trait scoring system developed by NAEP. This most sophisticated of the holistic scoring systems is reliable for comparing student performance from year to year. Unlike other holistic scoring, it does more than rank the performance of a particular group. A trait is either absent in a given writing sample, or it is present in some degree. The criteria for determining the degree is explicit, so assessors have more than a general impression about the quality of a given piece of writing. They can then compare overall writing performance over time and between groups because the primary trait scoring system yields more absolute information than other holistic scoring systems do.

The primary trait of the Stork Expressive test is: expressing a story. To succeed, a student must write fiction to account for a situation. Thus, the first thing readers of student papers looked for was narrative structures and amplifying detail to account for the given situation (explanation) and to "entertain with a particular view of the world (expression). The techniques of fiction require control of a consistent point of view." (NAEP Scoring Rationale, "Stork-Expressive," #0-102010-3)

Two members of the CAWP staff were trained by the same assessors who train NAEP scorers to administer the tests and to read and score the writing samples. Anne Mickles, the Project Evaluator, who was one of those trained, in turn trained the rest of the scorers, scoring training papers until they internalized the scoring system and became consistent in their assessments of the primary trait, which was to express a story. Each paper was assigned a number from 0 to 4, based on this scoring guide:

0. No response; picture instead of a story; illegible; illiterate; misunderstanding of task or writing on a different topic; or I don't know
1. No evidence of story-telling
2. Little story-telling beyond a gesture at the basic task. Invention of a situation, but flawed in one of these ways:
   a. Plot outline (beginning, middle, end) but little or no elaboration
   b. Rambling details but no plot
   c. Only a beginning
   d. Several separate stories with no connection among them
3. Clear evidence of plot and elaboration with appropriate details. Greater coherence with amplitude than 2, but flawed in one of these ways:
   a. One part of basic plot thinly or inconsistently detailed
   b. Situation established, and plot developed, but no clear or appropriate closure
   c. Completely elaborated plot, but inconsistent point of view, handling of dialogue or management of narration
4. A complete story, amply and appropriately detailed and fully as well as consistently resolved

The scoring of the tests was blind, meaning that the cover sheets that identified students by name, school, teacher, grade, age, class, and sex, were removed and coded, so the readers could make no distinction between the target and control group. The pre- and post-tests were also mixed together and scored at the same time. All students in each class took the test, but because of the large number of students tested (1,600), only half of the tests were

scored, and the selection was random.

The results of all this evaluation were impressive, as this table shows:

Table 1
Mean Writing Score Breakdown by Treatment Group and Level Comparison of Pre-test, Post-test and Difference Scores

	Pre-test		Post-test		Difference	
	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2
Grades 1, 2	0.76	0.93	1.66	1.56	0.90	0.63
Grades 3, 4	1.81	1.88	2.30	1.98	0.49	0.10
Grades 5, 6	2.31	2.25	2.56	2.42	0.25	0.17
Grades 7, 8	2.54	2.58	2.85	2.77	0.30	0.19
Grades 9, 10	3.08	3.12	3.22	3.13	0.14	0.01
Grades 11, 12	2.87	2.94	3.01	2.98	0.14	0.03
Total X	2.57	2.53	2.85	2.65	0.26	0.12

T1 = Project Group T2 = Control Group

Though there are no national norms for growth in writing, it is striking that students of Project teachers improved on the average more than twice as much as controls, across grade levels. Since scores were in whole numbers only, the .26 average for Project students reflects that over one-third of students' scores went up one whole point on the five-point scale, whereas fewer than one-fourth of the control students' scores went up, and more control students than Project students scores went down. Total growth was more in lower than in upper grades, but this was not surprising, considering that elementary children saw Project teachers all day, while upper grade students saw trained teachers only 50 minutes per day, and many high school classes lasted only one semester. Student gains held up consistently in different target schools.

Our research results were not only significant statistically but were related to valid educational goals because they 1) evaluated students' actual writing; 2) evaluated content, and did so in an objective, defined, reproducible way using a nationally verified instrument and the primary trait scoring system developed by NAEP; and 3) reflected in the testing instrument the same broad range of writing competence stressed in teachers' training—generation of ideas, elaboration of detail, organization, and response to audience.

We would hope that similar results could be achieved by a replication of this evaluation in other Project sites. We also hope that our demonstration of effectiveness will provide further evidence for funding sources that Writing Projects do achieve their aim of improving student writing performance.

A paper presented by Betty Jane Wagner; written by Betty Jane Wagner, Steven Zemelman and Anne Mickles of the Chicago Area Writing Project.

Concurrent Sessions—Elementary

Stories: A Prelude to Writing—Victor M. Rentel

One of the compensations for growing up is that the growing leaves a residue of productive impressions on mind and personality. For example, teachers have long held that listening to stories and deriving pleasure from them during early childhood deposit a residue of motivation and awareness which has a significant impact on learning to read. And research clearly supports this assumption (Cohen, 1968; Chomsky, 1972; Hollingsworth, 1977). Similarly, many teachers believe that exposure to stories and other kinds of written language is an important prelude to writing development. Writers have always credited other writers as having had enormous influence on their successful mastery of the craft of writing. But, unlike reading, there is little hard research to support this conclusion. In particular, little data exist that would help to define exactly what role stories do play in beginning writing development. What follows will be a brief review of the literature on the potential functions of story knowledge in beginning writing development, and, then, a series of suggestions for teachers of beginning writers.

There are several hypotheses about the role of story knowledge in writing development. A variety of scholars have argued that stories become represented in memory as dynamic schemata (Mandler and Johnson, 1977; Stein and Glenn, 1978), roughly analogous to scripts for a play (Shank and Ableson, 1975), which serve as basic units of memory for events and experiences. These schemata are thought to constitute familiar rhetorical structures which organize the flow of discourse into pertinent meaning units small enough to avoid overloading memory yet large enough to contain sufficient detail and theme for efficient comprehension (Chafe, 1977). Both Winograd (1979) and Halliday (1973) claim that these basic schemata or patterns act as guides or models for integrating language into texts—internally consistent segments of language which require for their interpretation reference to nothing but the discourse itself. Halliday (1973) takes the position that children acquire notions of what language is and how it works in terms of "relevant models" or patterns of discourse.

Narrative, of course, is one such pattern. And it is a pattern which occurs with more than casual frequency in children's beginning writing (Rentel and King, in press). Rental and King argue that children's written narratives closely resemble fairy tales and folk tales. They argue that exposure to these highly conventionalized tales results in children learning a rhetorical structure or scaffolding. Their data demonstrate that as children grow in their ability to comprehend, remember and retell stories, their ability to write and sustain stories of greater functional complexity and detail increases. Children's stories incorporate progressively more fairy-tale-like, action elements. Similarly, Rubin and Gardner (1977) observed that children acquire a general frame for fiction at about three years of age, and, that by four years of age, they begin to differentiate this general frame into specific genres with the frame for fairy tales emerging at this point in development. By six years of age, according to Applebee (1978), stock characters such as witches and fairies populate children's written and dictated stories. And their functional oral narratives contain action elements strikingly similar to the elements Vladimir Propp, (1968), a Russian structuralist, defined as morphological functions, basic structural units which comprise the primary organization for Russian fairy tales (Botvin, 1977; Botvin and Sutton-Smith, 1977).

Propp as well as other literary structuralists (Todorov, 1971; Maranda and Maranda, 1971; Bremond, 1970; Dundes, 1964; Levi-Strauss, 1967) have studied the constitutive principles which define the narrative form. Even though these scholars set forth somewhat different narrative principles, their analyses bear certain fundamental similarities to one another. All of them identify elements or units which are indispensable or essential to fictional narratives. According to these analyses, fictional narratives must contain a beginning which incorporates an initial state of satisfaction, well-being or equilibrium. This initial state is then compromised, complicated or degraded. The protagonist recognizes this change of state and takes action to repair, remedy or restore the initial state. Clearly there is a logical succession—a principle of order—manifest in these analyses. Children tell and write stories which incorporate substantially the same elements (Leondar, 1977). King, Rentel and Cook (1980), who studied children's dictated stories using Propp's more detailed analysis of the structure of fairy tales, obtained a significant correlation (.65) between the

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range of functions or Proppian structures found in these stories and the number of elemental structural units contained in them. Thus, in terms of structure, at least, children tell and write stories that roughly approximate the structure of fully developed fictional narratives.

The resemblance between children's stories and fairy tales has been documented in greater detail in a very recent study (King, Rentel, Pappas, Pettegrew and Zutell, 1981). This longitudinal study of children's writing development provides enticing evidence that structural elements found typically in fairy tales appear with increasing frequency as children mature as writers. The emergence of these elements in children's written stories coincides with their growing ability to comprehend and recall folk tales and fairy tales. Coupled with findings (Mandler and Johnson, 1977; Stein and Glenn, 1978) that children retell stories in a prototypic form—even when the stories have been scrambled deliberately—these new data argue that fairy tales constitute a dynamic reservoir of abstract states, complications and repairs which children particularize as events, characters and plot. These conventionalized rhetorical structures serve children as guides for the production of texts not in the sense of templates that children copy but as a basis for determining both necessary and sufficient elements of a story. Favat (1977) claimed that children are unfailingly engaged and delighted by fairy tales and folk tales largely because such tales have an extraordinarily conventionalized structure. In all probability, this conventionalized structure—represented in memory—is part of the knowledge base from which children select elemental plot units and organize them into related sequences of action playing upon varied temporal and character relations.

All of these perspectives seem to unite in the notion that highly conventionalized tales constitute an abstract and fundamental pool of representations in memory which contribute substantially to the text-forming strategies that children employ in designing their oral and written narratives. From these deposits children withdraw basic constituents of the narrative. They borrow temporarily from the reserve they have built up as readers and capitalize on their prior investment of interest and delight in predictable structure. The ultimate reserve which they draw upon in learning to write may be everyday life, but, certainly, their accounts stem also from tales larger than life.

One point which must be made clear is that these findings and theories do not imply that, to become good writers, students must first become good readers. It does not follow that good readers necessarily become good writers (Murray, 1968). Nor should it be concluded from the arguments above that students imitate models of writing. What children do learn of rhetoric from reading is a sense of the fixed and variable properties of genres as well as the characteristics that distinguish writing from speech. To compose a story entails not only abstract knowledge of narrative structure, but requires as well the ability to weave character, point of view, emphasis, and texture into a coherent whole. The skills involved arise not just from reading, but, more essentially, from being taught to write.

Reading and listening to stories are both important language arts activities in their own right. They need not be justified on the basis of their contribution to other language skills, yet both reading and listening do contribute to writing ability, particularly during the transitional period at the outset of schooling when children extend their communicative competence to include the written code. What children learn from listening and reading influences their ability to compose in the following ways. First, young writers must sustain a narrative in some cumulative way. They must produce a logically and temporarily ordered sequence of action units containing necessary and sufficient elements. Having a narrative schema represented in memory, comprised of basic functions or plot units, theoretically would constitute a distinct production resource for sustaining a text. With only a few structural units, a story could be sustained indefinitely by repeating structures and substituting new characters or attributes with each repetition. Second, as new units are learned, the addition of just a few units would increase enormously the potential range and depth of storymaking for children. Nuclear pairings such as "lack" and "lack liquidated" combined with others such as "villany" and "villany nullified" would enable young storytellers to increase the complexity of their stories. Further, these pairings, combined in parallel or in tandem, permit children to experiment with thematic variation, permutation, and reflection. The two stories that follow, written by the same second-grade child at different points during the school year, illustrate the addition of new plot units plus a nuclear pairing and demonstrate how children add dimension to their stories.

> I don't know but a long time ago there was a witch who lived in a castle. One day two little kids came to the castle and they turned into stone and the witch was old and her skin was wrinkled and she is ugly.

In this story, the child incorporated, an "arrival" and a "villainy" combined with several attributes of time and character and an implicit magical agent. To sustain his text, the child resorted to a listing of character attributes. In the next story the child incorporated a "lack" and its liquidation, a "villainy" and its nullification, a helpful prince and an explicit magical agent provided by a donor.

> There was a hungry witch. She eats little kids. One day two little kids came to her castle and she caught one of [the] kids. And took her to her castle and was about to eat her when a knock at the door and nobody was there and the girl said, "My, who (are) you?" And the witch got (to) the door and nobody was there but the prince and the prince was running away on his horse and the witch was mad. The witch was about to eat her but [she] didn't. The witch sent the girl out to get some food and a old woman said, "Say these magic words and you will be free: abracadabra!" So the girl went home and said, "Abracadabra."

These additional functions and pairings not only enabled this child to sustain his second narrative—without resorting to a listing of character attributes—but permitted him to add considerable dimension to the tale as well.

The instructional context that these stories grew out of was one where the teacher displayed two dozen books and stories about witches for several days and read aloud from them. Children in the class discussed these stories and retold favorite parts. The interest and excitement stimulated by this activity moved several of the children to write original stories with witches as central characters. What listening, reading and retelling apparently did for these children was to establish, first, something to write about. Children acquired a sense of the initial states or settings that actions grow out of in this genre of stories. They acquired rudimentary knowledge of how these initial states are compromised, complicated or degraded as well as how a protagonist sets out to remedy a complication or restore an initial state of equilibrium. The activities they engaged in helped the children to sort out underlying structural relations in this genre of narrative and establish principles of succession and variation. Second, they learned the purpose of this genre of text and the text-forming strategies through which this purpose may be achieved. Of course, this classroom activity by itself was not responsible for all these learnings. Unmistakably, others like it both at home and at school were essential to acquiring a broad range of complex knowledge about the genre. The point is that reading, retelling and discussing stories should not be regarded simply as ways to motivate children to write. Stories do motivate writing, but clearly they do much more.

While scholars are beginning to make headway in their quest to understand the structure of narrative texts, the truth is that very little is understood or known about children's narrative structures. From the brief review above, it appears safe to conclude that story structure constitutes an important source of knowledge for young children which contributes to their emerging ability to write. Stories are a mainstay of the language arts curriculum and the principal genre of written texts to which preschool children have been exposed. Because of their broad exposure to narrative texts in and out of school, the content, purpose, and structure of certain story forms have become reasonably well established as part of children's productive language competence within the first year or two of schooling. Given this intuitive familiarity with these forms of narrative, children can be easily motivated to grapple with the subtle but crucial distinctions they must learn between spoken and written texts and among the various genres of text. Learning these distinctions is one of the most important aspects of learning to write artfully and effectively. Exposure alone is an insufficient basis for learning these distinctions. Proper emphasis must be given to the exploration of narrative structure through discussion, retelling, comparison and contrast. These activities should highlight the settings and events of various kinds of stories—not in the sense of formal analysis but in the sense of typical dilemmas, villainies, desires, struggles, magical properties, repairs, resolutions, and the like. Stories, then, can be extraordinarily productive preludes to writing for beginning writers.

To demonstrate that writing stories has an intrinsic purpose—indeed that writing of every variety has a unique communicative purpose—children's stories should be shared. How else can children learn what features of stories entertain, interest and amuse an audience? Purpose turns on the fulcrum of audience. To acquire a full sense of the integral relationships between text and

audience, children must have opportunities to write for audiences other than the teacher—their friends and their parents, for starters. In this way they learn that writing must be shaped to the form and tenor of readers. These are bridges that all writers must cross. Children's constitutive and creative powers as writers, in this way, can be expected to travel beyond the limits of the fairy tale into the broader realm of narrative. In completing this journey, children will acquire language resources which undoubtedly will contribute to other transitions that await them. But the same careful preparation, illustration, discussion, and exploration should preface the transition to transactional and expressive writing, for exposure alone will not suffice in their case either. Only skillful teaching will.

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*Children's Literature: An Impetus to Composition**— John Warren Stewig

Clever ideas for motivating children's writing are abundant. Many books on composition are available. Articles in professional magazines report imaginative ideas that have worked. For a teacher interested in having children write creatively, the only problem is selecting which ideas to use.

Despite the plethora of suggestions for encouraging writing, children's composition is not as impressive as it might be. Too many students leave elementary school without developing the ability to use words imaginatively, to evoke a setting effectively, to create a believable character or fashion a convincing plot. There are two reasons for this.

One, far too seldom are ways to stimulate composition developed into a coherent, organized and sequential program in which one component leads logically to what follows. A bag full of clever motivating tricks will not develop writing skills unless these are put into a conceptual scheme that moves children progressively from one skill to another.

Two, we too seldom consider the act of composition itself. The craft of writing, including specific skills which can be acquired and practiced, is infrequently analyzed. From such analyses we can derive teaching principles to help improve children's writing.

The approach described here is only part of a total composition program which builds on initial observation experiences wherein children solve different kinds of writing problems. Most writers are especially sensitive observers. The program structures writing experiences in which children observe settings, people and occurrences and write about them. Such sensory writing lays needed groundwork for the craft of composition but will not be discussed further here.

It is also important to read regularly to children. Much literature:

1) appeals to many children psychologically before they are able to cope with the reading problems presented. Children enjoy *Charlotte's Web* long before most of them can cope with the intricacies of E.B. White's prose by themselves.
2) poetry, especially, must be heard for the full effect to be apparent. Few children can read Randall Jarrell's *The Bat Poet* by themselves and enjoy its full impact.
3) is so far from the beaten path that unless teachers help introduce it to children, it may be missed. Most children will encounter Judy Blume's writing by themselves; far fewer will encounter books by Felice Holman alone.

Literature as Language Input

A compelling reason for sharing literature regularly with the young is for the language input it provides. One author commented that:

> ...language environment of the home, peers, mass electronic media is generally too similar to the children's own language to provide the necessary stimulation and modeling needed for continued language development...
>
> Because of this, we need to provide exposure to language... much richer than the children's own ability to use language—language that is found readily in the best of printed materials for children.

To ensure students receive the fullest possible language stimulus, we must look carefully at what we read. In addition to a fine plot, the material should be language rich.

Exemplary language use is found in the best children's books. In the *Death of a Wombat,* Ivan Smith writes about a small Australian mammal, describing just one day of its life, the last day. The author makes impressive use of imagery and parallel construction. In describing the shoreline, he writes of "...the thrust-up arms of rock, and the crushed-up foam of breakers ...." The wombats are "dozing heaps in their holes." At the start of the day:

> "The tips of trees
> begin the day's thinking
> while their roots
> still lie asleep."

Later, he writes of the approaching fire:

> "The flames lash out at neighboring trees like the tails of angry cats. A mushroom of muddy smoke covers the sky. The sun is a far-off scarlet disk. Scalding sap splinters bark casings."

There are other, equally noteworthy, uses of language as the author moves the account to its

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inexorable close. Such is his skill that even sophisticated readers find themselves hoping the inevitable will not happen.

A more tranquil example comes from the book *Little Silk*. It is the appealing story of a small discarded doll, newly found and loved after years of neglect. An analysis of the language shows what can be done by a writer sensitive to ways words can be used. This is for you, with no suggestion that children should be told such information, or asked to make such analyses. Ayer writes:

> "Deep back in a night-black closet,
> hidden behind a tumble of boxes,
> boots and bundles,
> a faded silk doll
> sits and dreams and waits for the
> closet door to open."

Notice the choice of the word *deep*, instead of the more common *way* back, or *far* back. *Night-black* is a fine choice, since it intensifies the darkness in the closet in a particularly effective way. The doll is hidden in a *tumble* of boxes, again an unusual word choice which attracts our notice, albeit unconsciously. The alliteration of *boxes, boots* and *bundles* is a natural one. From among all the objects that might be in a closet, the writer has chosen three beginning with the same sound. Notice the triplet construction: *sits* and *dreams* and *waits*. This three-part construction parallels the three words beginning with *b*. As children listen to language, the stylistic devices and the structures used by mature authors, they are assimilating unconsciously techniques and ideas they will be able to use later.

Composition Problems

Many writing problems children are asked to solve are based directly on literature. That is, the book is not used simply for the subliminal enlarging of children's understanding, but rather as a direct base for writing. A composition is chosen, and a writing task is constructed which grows from it. The teacher reads the story or poem and children compose as a consequence. We will consider here five techniques:

1) story retelling
2) alphabet books
3) wordless books
4) plot completion, and
5) point of view.

Story Retelling

A simple way to begin establishing a relation between book literature and children's composition is to ask them to retell a story in their own words. At first this may seem simplistic but in fact translating from the aural mode—listening to a story—into their own language is a valuable activity for children.

One kindergarten teacher used a version of *The Three Bears*. After reading it to her children, she asked students to retell it in their own words. The following illustrates Kim's use of language to recreate the story. The sequence is firmly restated, and in several places the dictated story includes a rhythm reminiscent of the original.

> The 3 bears had their porridge, but it was too hot so they decided to go for a little walk. Then came a little girl named Goldilocks. Goldilocks knocked and knocked on the door. She just went straight in without anybody answering. She went in and saw a table full of 3 bowls of porridge. Then she tasted the Papa bear's, but it was too hot! Then she tasted the Mama bear's, but it was too cold! Then she tasted the Baby bear's, and it was just right, so she kept on eating until it was gone. Then she decided to have a little tiny rest; so, she walked right to the Papa bear's chair, and it was too hard. The she tried the Mama bear's chair, and it was too soft. Then she tried the Baby bear's, and it was just right. So, she sat in it and fell right through to the floor. Then Goldilocks went upstairs to the bedroom. She was sleepy so she tried Papa bear's bed, but it was too hard. The she tried Mama bear's bed, but it was too soft. Then she tried Baby bear's bed, and it was just right; so, she slept and slept and slept. She kept on sleeping and sleeping and didn't wake up until the bears got home. When the bears got home, Papa bear said, "Somebody's been eating my porridge." Mama bear said, "Somebody's been eating my porridge." Then the Baby bear cried, "Somebody ate my porridge all up!" Then the bears went into the dining room, and Papa bear said, "Somebody's been sitting in my chair." Mama bear said, "Somebody's been sitting in my chair." The Baby bear said, "Somebody's been sitting in my chair and broke it all up!" Then they went upstairs. Papa bear said, "Somebody's been sleeping in my bed." Mama bear said, "Somebody's been sleeping in my bed." Then Baby bear said, "Somebody's been sleeping in my bed, and here she is!" Then Goldilocks woke up and ran downstairs right out of the door. She ran safely home to her mother and her mother kissed her. The 3 bears never saw Goldilocks again.

Alphabet Books

A technique worth exploring with older children is using the alphabet book as a model for composition. While many of these lavishly illustrated picture books are simply collections of unrelated objects, some few contain a sequential story line. This type can be used with intermediate grade students as a basis for composition.

In introducing the writing problem to fifth graders, one teacher first acknowledged she was aware such books were far beneath them. After they agreed, she explained that the kindergarten children wanted some new alphabet stories, and asked if they would help. With this cover for their self-concept, they listened intently as the teacher read *ABC Bunny*. *Apricot ABC* would also be appropriate. During the discussion which followed, children commented that each letter had to be used. It had not escaped their attention that to do this while telling a story which made sense was no mean feat. Several days later Heather turned in the following description, called,

The Animal Alphabet (just for you)

A is for the Alligator who is throwing a big party. If you look and listen closely he'll tell you about his friends.
B is for Bunnies hopping around.
C is for Cat that likes to bound.
D is for Dog that chases the cat.
E is for Extra big that the Elephant is.
F is for Funny Frogs that hop all around.
G is for Goat and Gopher, too.
H is for Hippo that loves Hay.
I is for Iguana, all rough and scaly.
J is for Jaguar hidden by his spots.
K is for Kangaroo. Hop, hop, hop.
L is for Lion. King of the jungle.
M is for Monkey, all in a bungle.
N is for Narwhale, all big and funny.
O is for Owl, wise and cunning.
P is for Peacock with "eyes" on its tail.
Q is for the Quail, fast and swift.
R is for Rabbit. Its baby is a bunny.
S is for Snail, Slow but Sleek.
T is for Turtle, small and meek.
U is for Unicorn with a long horn.
V is for Vulture, big and ugly.
W is for Walrus with two big tusks.
X is for any animal in your imagination.
Y is for Yak that talks like this at the party: yackety, yak, yak.
Z is for Zebra, also for Zoo.
And you're invited to the party, too.

Wordless Books

Another composition experience presents a translation problem. We use wordless picture books effectively in asking children to take a story the artist has encoded in pictures and reencode it in their own words. The ability to recast a message in another form is a major distinguishing characteristic of fluent communicators. A significant difference between those who use language easily and less competent language users is the former are usually able to say something in several ways.

If variety in encoding is a mark of communication competency, we should provide opportunities for students to take a message in one mode and recommunicate it in another. Translating a written story into a dramatization is one example. Changing a wordless picture book into a dictated or written story is another.

One kindergarten teacher used *The Egg Book*. The pictures tell of a befuddled hen, in bright yellow, red and orange, who searches for an egg to tend. She discovers several, but in each case what hatches out follows after its real mother. Finally, almost accidentally, she discovers she has laid an egg of her own, and is delighted when it hatches a chick needing her care. After looking at the pictures, the group of five-year-olds dictated this composite story.

"One day a chicken looked for her egg."
"I'm looking for my baby chicken."
"She looked all day. She looked everywhere. She found another hen who had an egg in a yellow nest. It was her own, she thought."
"It hatched because it was so warm."
"She said to the other chicken, 'Do you know what? There's a crack in your egg.' Then she went past it."
"I found my chicken that cracked out the egg."
"Hello, Chick."
"The chick was yellow. It was so cute. It walked out of the egg."
"It followed the mother. She couldn't find her egg."
"Now she found another egg. She sat on this one and thought it was her egg. It wasn't her egg. It really wasn't. A different animal came out. It was a turtle. She thought it was her egg again."
"She kept thinking that over and over. The egg cracked. Instead of her chick it was a tiny alligator. 'HELP!'"
"She thinks this is her egg. 'I hope this is my egg. It's cracking. This is my egg, I think.' The mother ostrich came to take her baby to her

house or nest. They left the chicken."

"She found an egg this time that was hers, she thought. She walked away from it. Then it hatched. It was her chick, all wet. No one else can use it except her. No one can be its babysitter but her. It followed Mother everywhere."

The composition was of immediate, compelling interest to the group. Following the dictation and recording of the chart story, the teacher reread it to the children, encouraging those who recognized some of the words to read along with her; thus she was continuing her informal approach to reading readiness. For the rest of the week the story remained where children could go and "reread" it themselves. Using such natural language of children makes the reading process more meaningful.

In addition to group composition, this teacher also encouraged individuals to dictate stories based on wordless books. After the teacher read *Lost* by Sonia Lisker, Lindsay told the following:

"Once the Mast family went to the zoo for a picnic. They stopped for some peanuts. They got their picture taken and went into the zoo. When they saw the elephants, the elephants tried to sneak some peanuts. After that they saw the lions. The lions were just sitting around licking their paws. When Bobby saw the monkeys, he was happy because Bobby had a monkey puppet. The monkeys made all sorts of faces. Now they were going into the children's zoo. Bobby saw lambs and geese, and he hugged one. It felt so fluffy that he hugged it again. He gave them peanuts. Then he walked away. When he stood up, he found his family was gone. Bobby looked for his family. When he went past the animals again, they started to get him scared. He walked very sadly. He sat down and saw a balloon. Bobby walked toward the balloon and found a little boy, younger than him. Bobby showed him his monkey and cheered him up. They walked all over the zoo. They saw elephants and gave them some peanuts. They kept on walking, and then they found the little boy's family. The father threw Bobby in the air, and Bobby's family saw him, and both had a picnic."

The story shows the syntactic variety possible in children's oral language. The sentences vary from a short one of four words, "Then he walked away," to an extended one (17 words). "The father threw Bobby in the air, and Bobby's family saw him and both had a picnic." This syntactic variation is more complex than sentence patterns children find in beginning reading materials. Because of this, such child-dictated stories should be part of beginning reading instruction.

Plot Completion

Plot completion experiences are effective composition problems at different age/grade levels. The task demands that children take clues about characters and setting from what has been read. Using these to write a convincing conclusion is a useful composition challenge. Simple stories work well with young children. Leo Lionni's book entitled *A Color of His Own* works well for this purpose. The timid chameleon is trying to achieve an identity stronger than his constantly changing skin color indicates. One after another his attempted solutions fail, until at last he meets another chameleon. What will they do? Stopping here assures high motivation as children complete the story.

With older students, longer fiction, including some quite remote from the children's experience, will work. A third grade teacher used the book *Cowslip*. The story is a realistic historical account of a brave pre-teen black slave, about to be sold to a new master. The abrupt separation from younger brothers and sisters is harsh punishment for her. Through carelessness, Cowslip is not manacled when the other slaves are, and so, engulfed by the noise and confusion of the slave market, she must decide what to do.

The students who responded were upper-middle-class children who had only limited contacts with blacks. The slavery issue was remote to them, despite their teacher's brief introduction. Yet their writing shows the ability to empathize with another child in trouble and to create a plot that is plausible. Notice the accumulation of detail that adds to the convincing quality of Charles' completion. He wrote:

She was there alone. It was cool. She stood quietly as a breeze swept across her yellow bandana. She started to run. Her bandana fell off and she was unaware of it. Her new master saw her run. Cowslip noticed he was after her. She ran even faster, so fast she made a sharp turn and lost him. He was nowhere to be seen. Cowslip stopped and glanced nervously to see if anyone was behind her. No one was in sight. She was very tired, and very, very hungry.

It was quiet and cool. It was fall. The leaves were red, yellow, orange, green and brown. A chipmunk scampered through the pretty leaves.

She was free. She was also very scared. Cowslip heard the clattering of horse's feet. She started to run again. She ran past trees, houses and animals. She got tired and hid in trees. The slave hunters rode past her. She was safe again. She noticed her yellow bandana was gone. She wouldn't find it again. Her best possession was gone.

Cowslip wondered about the children. She wondered and wondered. "What should I do?" She repeated that question over and over again. She told herself she must go on. It started to drizzle as the cool breeze swept on. The moon came out. It was full that night. So was her head! It was full of ideas. "It's a bitter evening," she said to herself. She hid in the trees and soon fell asleep. She was cold as small drops of rain fell down her back. She had a dream. It was about Mariah and the youngsters. She and the youngsters were happy and free.

Then she awoke that day at sunrise. She walked on and ran into a friend. Her name was Cathy. She also was a slave. She wore blue pants and a white shirt. She was running away, too. They walked together. Cathy was older than Cowslip. Cowslip told Cathy about the youngsters. Cathy promised they would all be free and go on the underground railroad to the north. Would this be true?

In this next completion, Lenore adds conversation, and carries the story farther than other children did.

Cowslip decided that she was going to escape! She went quietly out the door, across the street when she suddenly saw Colonel Sprague. She ran behind a rock and waited untjl Colonel Sprague went away. Now she would have to be very careful, and if she saw anyone coming, she would hide behind a bush, or a rock, or anything to hide behind. When she finally couldn't walk any longer, she sat down on a log nearby. As soon as she had rested her legs, she heard someone crying. When she came a little closer, she saw it was a slave boy crying. She walked a little bit closer, but the boy didn't notice.

"What's the matter?" she finally managed to ask. "Well, me and my father..." "My father and I," Cowslip corrected, but the boy didn't pay any attention to her. "Me and my father ran away, and they caught him, and now he's going to be hanged." "Well, why don't you come with me?" Cowslip suggested. "O.K.," said the slave boy with tears trickling down his cheeks. So they walked together. They came to a woods that had nice clean water in the rivers, and big juicy berries that grew on bushes.

Once they almost got caught. Cowslip and the slave boy heard some hoofbeats. It was probably a white man! "Quick, let's hide behind a rock or something!" said Cowslip in a panic. "There is no rock or something," said the slave boy. Cowslip thought in panic what they could hide behind. "Run, run as fast as your legs can go!" shouted Cowslip. They ran pretty fast but the white man saw the last of the slave boy's feet turn the corner. "Runaway slave," thought the man. But when Cowslip turned the corner she saw a pile of leaves.

"Quick, cover yourself with these leaves," said Cowslip. Meanwhile the white man thought to himself, "The slave is probably going to trick me and go the other way, so I'll just wait here and trick the slave." And then when he saw that the slave wasn't coming, he left.

They went through a lot of adventures but not any of them were as scary as that one. Once Cowslip heard a slave talk about an underground railroad, and now was the time she found one. Underground railroads are people that hide slaves and keep them safe. Well, here was her chance. She went in, and went down in the basement and hid until the next night came. Then she'd go to the next railroad house and to the next.

One day the Civil War started and the same time the slave boy got very, very sick. Cowslip did all she could do to make him better, but he couldn't live anymore, and one day he just died. Now she was alone, but not for long. She found a bird eating bird seed. The bird suddenly flew away with Cowslip following after her. She finally saw an old cottage in the distance. She walked up and opened the door, and saw an old lady huddled up in a corner. When the woman saw the girl, she got up and and got Cowslip water and something to eat. They became fast friends. They both fixed up the cottage and after a while the Civil War ended, and all the slaves were free! When Cowslip found out the good news, she said to herself, "I'm free, free at last!"

Point of View

Another challenging writing problem deals with point of view. The egocentric nature of young children has been described by such psychologists as Piaget. To help them grow from this egocentricity to an awareness of the ideas, problems, feeling and

reactions of others, we ask them to assume the role of another.

A convenient way to do this is to have them recast a story told in third person into first person narrative. Folk tales work especially well for this purpose because their brevity makes it possible for children to hold the plot in their minds as they write.

Much folk literature is told in third person—the impersonal, omniscient narrator recounts what happens. After sharing several tales, in discussion with a group we identify the narrator's qualities. These include being able to see (and report on) things happening to all characters, even if they occur at widely separated locations at the same time. This contrasts with the more limited ability of each of the characters to know only what happens to them or what is reported to them.

The writing task for children is to retell the story, switching from third to first person. In becoming a character and retelling the story from that point of view, children deal with some crucial problems:

One, personalizing the account to include a character's reaction—the feelings engendered by a plot event—is a valuable challenge. In *Snow White,* for instance, the usual third person account specifies only that she awoke from the sleep induced by the poisoned apple. Children, when assuming the persona of Snow White, can describe how she would have felt upon awakening. **Two,** children are compelled to account for events which happened when the character whose identity they are assuming was not present. Again to use the Snow White example, there is no direct way she can have known about the making of the poisoned apple. To rewrite the story from her point of view, the child must in some way explain what Snow White knows about the apple and *how* she knows it.

One fourth grade child rewrote the tale as if she were one of the dwarfs.

> One day I was coming home from work and I heard some shouting in the front of the line. I ran up to see what was the matter. I hear "Someone's been drinking out of my mug! "and "Someone's been using my fork, knife and spoon!" So I ran around to see if any of my things were used. I looked in my bed. There, sleeping in my bed was a beautiful little girl. I gasped in surprise. Nobody woke her. When she woke up, you couldn't hear a single word that anybody said. "What's your name?" and "How did you get here?" was all that anybody was saying. The girl answered all of our questions and said, "If you don't mind, would it be all right if I stay here?" We all said yes, she could stay. She was a good maid. The next day we came home from work and Snow White was lying on the ground. Right away we suspected the Wicked Queen. We found out that her laces were tight, and we unlaced them. We warned her. The next night we came home and again, she was lying on the ground. We found a comb in her hair and took it out. We warned her not to let a single soul into the house! The next night we came home and there, lying on the ground was Snow White. We searched her hair, and looked at her laces, but nothing was wrong. She was dead. We cried for two days. Then a prince came along. "I can't bear to live without Snow White," said the prince. "Well," I said, "O.K. Take very good care of her." "Yes, of course." Then we watched them go away. The men that were carrying the coffin (I forgot to tell you, we put her in a glass coffin) tripped and a piece of apple came out of her mouth. Then she rose out of the coffin. "Who are you?" she asked the prince. "I am a prince," he said. "Will you marry me?" "Yes," Snow White said, "With all my heart." Then they had a wedding and we were there. The wicked queen came too. They put iron shoes on her. She danced around on red hot coals until she dropped dead. We were all very happy.

By the time students are eleven or twelve, interest in folk tales diminishes. Children at this age have come to grips with the difference between their earlier, egocentric view of a perfect world, and the reality of life as it is. They turn resolutely from the fantasy world of folk tales. Despite this we must not neglect using folk literature in stimulating older children's writing.

Recently we tried an experiment with fifth graders, intelligent, articulate children from advantaged backgrounds. The teacher felt they would disdain anything as juvenile as a fairy tale. To overcome this, she asked students to rewrite the tale, to make more stories for the first graders to enjoy. The gusto with which they undertook the task is reflected in their writing.

In this retelling, notice the mature language patterns, particularly apparent in the vocabulary chosen and in more elaborate syntax used. Jenny retold the story from Snow White's point of view.

> One day I was playing in a nice little garden, when this big man came up to me and grabbed my arm.
>
> He took me into the forest, and held a knife up to me. I begged him for mercy to spare my life.

He did. Then he did an odd thing. He killed a wild boar and took some things from his insides. I think it was his heart and liver.

Then he told me to leave and never to return.

I started to run and grew very tired. The trees seemed like ghosts, and their branches reached out to me. I was scared.

Soon I came upon a small cottage. I went in.

In the room was a table, and on the table were seven little goblets with wine in them, and seven little plates with food on them.

I took a little wine from each goblet, and a little food from each plate.

By then I was very tired, so I went in this little room with seven little beds. I tried every single one of them until I found the bed that I liked best.

I woke up and gave a little yell. There were seven little dwarfs staring at me! I was a little bit startled.

I told the dwarfs my story. They felt sorry for me. So they told me that I could stay if I mended, cooked, cleaned the house, made their beds, etc.

I said I would, so I stayed!

During the day the dwarfs went out to look for some gold. They worked all day.

One day when I was cleaning the house, an old lady came to the door.

She told me she was selling things. She asked me if I wanted to buy some new lace. The lace looked so nice I was tempted and bought some.

She laced my dress up so tight that I couldn't breathe. I felt faint and dropped down dead to the floor.

When I woke up the seven little dwarfs were around me. I told them what happened and they warned me not to even open the door to strangers.

The next day I was cleaning up the house when an old lady came to the door.

She asked me if I wanted to buy any combs. The comb was so pretty I let her comb my hair with it. I felt faint again and fell down to the floor.

I woke up with the seven little dwarfs around me. I told them what happened. They told me again to not ever talk to anyone.

When they left they bolted the door.

While I was doing the housework an old lady came to the door.

She offered me an apple. She even took a bite out of it, so I knew it was all right.

I was tempted again.

I felt faint and dizzy again, and fell down to the floor.

When I woke up and there was a prince holding me.

I said goodbye to the dwarfs and the prince and I rode off together.

We got married the next day.

We held a celebration and invited the wicked queen.

When she came, for her punishment we gave her a pair of very hot, heavy slippers. We made her dance until she dropped down dead.

Then We Lived Happily Ever After.

Most folk tales work equally well, though the technique also works with modern fiction.

We have briefly considered five writing techniques to improve children's composition skills. Suggestions were made about ways to use: 1) story retelling, 2) alphabet books, 3) wordless books, 4) plot completion, and 5) point of view.

It is important to keep in mind that these strategies, however attractive, must be seen within the context of a total composition program if children are to achieve their full potential as writers. The craft of writing is mastered slowly, but it can be mastered with pleasure if we think about what we will have children do, and why.

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Concurrent Sessions—Secondary

The Ohio Writing Project: Training Professional Teachers of Writing—Mary Hayes

"I am a 'born again' writer—not only in a personal pragmatic sense, but also in that I feel the urge to go out and proselytize students."

This is a comment from a teacher who attended the first summer institute of the Ohio Writing Project* at Miami University. If the depth of feeling surprises you, it surprises us too. When we asked the twenty-three participating teachers to summarize their attitudes toward writing and to evaluate the experience in the five-week institute, we expected thoughtful, sensitive responses, because the teachers had been a thoughtful, sensitive group. We were not prepared, however, for the intensity of their responses.

But we were happy about the responses and the evaluations: they indicated the success of the program. When the teachers entered the institute, many were obviously weary from their often frustrating, at times seemingly hopeless task of teaching composition to elementary and secondary students. Some suffered from the highly publicized but seldom remedied "teacher burnout." When they left the institute, they were "recharged," their attitudes toward teaching improved: "I came here burned out as a classroom teacher; I'm leaving tired but reborn," one remarked.

This kind of fervor permeates Writing Project activities, though the Writing Project is hardly a revival, an EST meeting, or an encounter group. It's a serious academic endeavor designed to upgrade the teaching of writing in the schools by retraining language arts teachers. Through its summer institutes and subsequent inservice programs, the Project introduces classroom teachers to new ways of teaching writing, increases their knowledge of the writing processes, and involves them in writing and editing activities.

The Ohio Writing Project is part of the National Writing Project which began in 1974, the result of a three-year study by a group of San Francisco Bay Area educators on the causes of declining skills among California students. These educators concluded that most writing problems could be traced directly to instructional problems. As Professor James Gray, Director of the National Writing Project, states: "Investigation and experience ... show that the single most important factor [behind the writing crisis] is the lack of expertise on the part of teachers."

To help correct this problem, Gray and his associates instituted a teacher-training program at the University of California/Berkeley. The Bay Area Writing Project, as it was called, was unlike other university-administered teacher-training programs: it was based on the premise that classroom teachers themselves hold the key to better writing instruction. At the core of the Bay Area Writing Project model is the assumption that experienced classroom teachers, working on their own, have developed individual solutions to students' writing problems. But they have few opportunities to show their colleagues what they know or to learn from their colleagues who might have solved other problems in the teaching of writing. Moreover, they have little time to study new developments in composition theory, or to work on their own writing skills. The Bay Area program brought such experienced teachers together, let them demonstrate techniques that worked in their own classrooms, provided them access to resources in composition theory and gave them a chance to improve their own writing. Most important, it treated them as professionals. As Ben Nelms, editor of *English Education*, asserts, the National Writing Project assumes that teachers have "their own areas of professional expertise, their own successful classroom experiences to report, and their own contribution to make to the improvement of their fellows ... This shared responsibility for improved teaching may be the theme of a new and exciting professionalism."

The original Bay Area Writing Project was a success, producing improved teacher attitudes, enhanced competence, and subsequently—according to some sources—improved student writing. One California high school credits the Berkeley/Bay Area Project with boosting student scores on statewide writing tests from the 25th to the 61st percentile. Another school maintains that students' SAT scores rose 50 points because its teachers participated in the Project. Because of the Project's initial success, NEH and the Carnegie Corporation supported the establishment of other sites throughout the country; and as a consequence,

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the single site at Berkeley has now grown into the National Writing Project, a network of seventy-four writing centers which follow the original Bay Area model. As Paul Diederich, of the Educational Testing Service, remarked: "I now believe that the Bay Area Project [model] is one of those ideas that will last—like Langdell's invention of the case method of teaching law about 1870."

The Ohio Writing Project began operation in the spring of 1980. The first summer institute was conducted from June 30 to July 31, with twenty-three teachers from four southwest Ohio counties—Butler, Clermont, Hamilton, and Montgomery. These teachers were designated Ohio Writing Project Fellows, and were each paid a stipend of $450 for participating in the Institute. The Fellows made a varied group, a group composed of elementary, junior high, and high school teachers; they were teachers of language arts, English, reading, French, Spanish, and even Latin. But they had in common an openness to new ideas and a desire to become more effective teachers of writing.

Since the basic premise of the Writing Project model is that the best person to show classroom teachers how to improve their teaching is another classroom teacher who has solved some of the everyday problems teachers face, the Fellows were responsible for much of the operation of the institute. Each Fellow presented one technique for teaching writing, a technique that had worked well in his or her classroom. We encouraged the teachers to include handouts with their presentations explaining and illustrating their ideas, and to involve the teachers as much as possible in actual writing.

The group was understandably nervous at first, and so were we: the procedure of treating students as professionals is certainly not typical in a graduate class. But the teachers soon warmed to the idea and learned to depend on themselves, looking to us only for advice on theory, or for suggestions about background reading that might settle a dispute. By the end of the institute, each member of the group had compiled a notebook bulging with handouts describing various ideas for teaching writing. These included suggestions for using student journals, teaching sentence combining and Christensen rhetoric, introducing research activities, helping students to organize their writing, teaching paragraph development and grammar, using literature and art to teach writing, and evaluating students' writing.

The fact that we had teachers teaching other teachers helped the group to develop both a cohesiveness and a professional attitude toward their learning, both of which intensified as the summer progressed. On the second day, a usually reserved, but sometimes outspoken elementary school teacher presented a series of writing assignments he had used with his students. He apologized that his ideas were probably not applicable for the high school teachers in the group. Thus began one of the summer's liveliest discussions, and one that established the group's unity. In the discussion, the teachers concluded that certain basic procedures for teaching writing are applicable at all levels. Then, abruptly, the discussion moved to the general dissatisfaction *all* of them felt when faced with dispirited students, irate parents, unappreciative administrators, and disgruntled taxpayers. That second-day discussion, begun because of an apology, broke the ice. No longer twenty-three individuals, they became a cohesive group—agrumentative at times, at times almost rowdy. But, finally, always willing to listen to each other. During that discussion, one young teacher from a school district in Cincinnati lamented that teachers at all levels receive almost no reinforcement, that they never share ideas, seldom even share praise. At the end of the five weeks, another teacher summed up the group attitude similarly:

> Teachers get so little support for their problems, their endeavors, their hopes and dreams. To find 26 people who were supportive, who listened, was for me a wonderful experience. It has truly changed my attitude toward teaching.

The institute depended largely on the teachers' own expertise, but there were other valuable sources of information also. Several nationally known guest speakers gave invited presentations. Keith Caldwell of the National Writing Project demonstrated ways of getting reluctant student writers to write. Cathy Keech and Mary Ellen McNelly, also from the National Writing Project, showed how to develop writing fluency and offered suggestions about how to evaluate student writing. Donald Daiker of Miami University gave a presentation on sentence combining. Even the directors got into the act—Gil Storms with a demonstration of analytic and holistic grading, Mary Hayes with one on revision strategies, and Max Morenberg with a presentation on grammar. In addition, there were weekly reading assignments and bibliographies on the teaching of writing distributed by the directors and other speakers.

The institute was not all reading and presentations, however. The teachers wrote every day, and 26 times a week joined in small groups to

edit and discuss each other's writing. These writing and editing activities gave the teachers firsthand knowledge of the writing process and made them increasingly sensitive to what they ask of their students. For many, the personal writing led to a genuine re-evaluation of themselves as writers and writing teachers. As one said: "My self-consciousness about writing has disappeared as if by magic; this still seems a miracle to me." Another teacher voiced both the anxiety and the sense of accomplishment she felt in writing, and reflected on how this experience would probably affect her teaching:

> Always an agonizer when writing for critical or public surveillance, I found the tasks assigned remained arduous. Even the in-class five or ten minute exercises posed difficulties. However, once the initial block was broken, words came—not necessarily flowing smoothly, fitting together in well ordered syntax; but words fell, sometimes tumbling, sometimes stumbling from my pen ... I have gained confidence, not to stand before my class as an all-knowing despot, but as a kindly guide and mentor. The students will know that I, too, am learning.

By the end of the institute, the teachers had learned much about writing and about themselves as writing teachers. In their evaluations of the program, they indicated that their new knowledge and skills would significantly affect their teaching, that they would assign more writing as well as pay closer attention to writing problems and to methods of developing writing competence. Overall, they seemed especially influenced to spend more class time in reducing students' reluctance to write and in teaching students to be both more fluent and better organized writers.

The summer institute is only the first part of a continuing effort by the Ohio Writing Project to retrain writing teachers. After the institute, Fellows become Writing Project staff, working as consultants in the Project's inservice program. The Project inservice program offers a series of workshops on topics similar to those discussed in the institute. These topics include: The Writing Process: Prewriting, Writing, Revision; Journal Writing to Develop Fluency; Creative Approaches to Research; Teaching the Reluctant or Apprehensive Writer; How the Mature Writer Writes: Sentence Combining; Writing Across the Curriculum; Community-Centered Writing Activities; Knowing What You Want and Getting It: Evaluating Student Writing; Writing About Literature; and Using Poetry to Develop Fluency. The inservice workshops are conducted by the institute graduates.

Since the success and vitality of the inservice program depend on the staff's ability to adapt their workshops to the differing needs of individual schools and districts, we have recently appointed an Inservice Director from among the institute graduates, Rosalie Lemkin of W.M. Sellman Middle School in Madeira, to work closely with the staff in developing and coordinating programs tailored to the specific requests of teachers and administrators in different schools or districts. So far, we have been able to offer individual workshops and a complete inservice program of ten bimonthly presentations. Last October, Ann Johnson, from Princeton City Schools, presented a program on community-based writing instruction to the Dayton City School District. Leslie Bush, from Finneytown High School, and her art-teacher husband, have presented a session on writing and art to the teachers at the School for the Creative and Performing Arts in Cincinnati. Three staff members have prepared a workshop in pre-writing, writing about literature, and community-based writing activities for the Ohio Department of Education's spring conference. And, finally, staff members have developed a yearlong series of presentations for the Madeira School District.

The Ohio Writing Project's future rests largely on how well we answer the needs of teachers and school systems within the state. Because our institute draws its strength from classroom teachers and because the inservice staff is made up of those same teachers, we feel the Ohio Writing Project will become a statewide resource that teachers and school systems can draw sustenance from. After all, teachers themselves best know what problems they face each day in the writing classroom. And they are, finally, the only ones who have worked out practical solutions for their problems, solutions that work in the classroom, not just in education textbooks or college training programs. One rallying cry for the Project came from a teacher last summer who asserted correctly. "We need it; let's do it ... We must develop teachers of writing who write!" We would only add that we must develop teachers of writing who not only write but who know how to teach others to write, and who are willing to share their knowledge with their colleagues. That's what we are trying to do at the Ohio Writing Project—develop knowledgeable professionals.

The paper, presented by Mary F. Hayes, was developed by Mary F. Hayes, Max Morenberg and C. Gilbert Storms.

WRITING—into, out of, beyond LITERATURE—
Nancy Kersell

In a recent talk to the leaders of the California Writing Project, Charles Cooper pointed out how writing makes unique demands on writers by requiring them to engage in a number of conflicting and complicated psychological tasks at one time. As teachers of composition, we intuitively understand this process, and appreciate our students' reluctance and apprehension about writing. Yet we often expect our students in literature classes not only to master "the complex intellectual processes required for writing," but also to apply this skill in explaining/interpreting a literary work.

We have imposed a formidable responsibility upon our students. According to the teacher, writing about literature should enable the student to reveal comprehension of what is read, reinforce analytical thinking, and improve the organization and expression of ideas. The students, however, frequently encounter obstacles as they attempt to fulfill these expectations. They may have a limited understanding of what they have read and be unable to identify, let alone explain, the theme. They may not have a disciplined approach for arranging ideas. They may not have confidence in their writing ability. We often are unaware of these problems, because many of us do little writing ourselves. We are accustomed to giving our students the *intention* to complete an assigned paper on *A Separate Peace*, rather than the *motivation* to discover in the process of writing an understanding of the novel.

One unfortunate consequence of this common practice is that, after imposing these constraints upon our students, we seldom discover any noticeable improvement in the quality of their writing. Perhaps we need to reconsider whether our writing assignments encourage fluency, rather than correctness, and include a variety of modes which increase the student's imaginative involvement in comprehending and writing about literature. If we believe that "writing can give the writer more intimate access to his thinking... that it forces him to be more precise in his language and more attentive to the relationships between his thoughts," then our purpose is clear. We first must encourage fluency in student writing. Only then will our students realize that "writing reinforces what the students have learned, and helps them to interpret the facts for themselves."

"Fractured Fairytale" Exercise

Since the beginning of my high school teaching career, my primary concern has been to confront students with the need to communicate clearly, concisely, and concretely. I explain in my writing courses that students must understand and apply more than the fundamentals of grammar and mechanics in their compositions, because the process and practice of writing involves an increasingly complex mastery of expository skills. As my students and I discuss common and critical problems evident in their essays, I emphasize three primary writing objectives: precise diction, varied patterns in sentence structure, and unified paragraphs. Writing assignments need not be limited, however, to the traditional definition or classification paper to refine these skills. Among my sophomores the most popular assignment I offer is the "Fractured Fairytale" narrative.

A former student provided the catalyst for this idea. After she described a recent paper she had written revising *"The Princess and the Pea"* for a freshman English class, I decided to challenge my imaginative honors sophomores with my own version of this assignment. My purpose was not only to introduce the technique of writing a narrative using description, plot, dialogue and point of view, but also to provide an opportunity for creative expression. Initially, my students were responsive, but skeptical.

First, I listed the titles of ten to fifteen familiar fairytales, ranging from *Rip Van Winkle* to *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Several books obtained from the library supplemented our own knowledge of these stories, as we discussed their general plot, characters, and appeal. Then I presented the assignment. Each student was to select one fairytale for "revision." After becoming familiar with the original story, he was to submit his own interpretation of the story in about 500 words. I did impose a few sensible limitations: no vulgarity, no excessive alteration of plot (so that the original would remain recognizable), and no plagiarism from Thurber. I did encourage them to change names, use puns, create new settings, or embellish the tale with appropriate episodes. They were given seven days to complete these papers, which I intended to

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collect in a folder to be displayed and enjoyed by everyone.

I was relieved by the minimal number of problems this assignment created. A few students had trouble selecting a story; several had no idea how to begin. Most of them, however, eagerly discussed what they intended to change, and each day many of them read portions of their papers to each other for approval and suggestions. The only serious obstacle we encountered was whether to supply a moral for the story. Some students felt that the central purpose of most fairytales was to instruct rather than entertain, but they were not sure how to write a moral if the story seemed inconclusive. I encouraged them to combine the lesson with the story if possible.

The Fractured Fairytale assignment serves to provide variety in essay assignments, establish a story form for students at any grade level to follow, encourage creative literary interpretation and allow student control of the assignment.

The benefits of writing out of and beyond familiar fairytale literature are many. First of all, the assignment creates student enthusiasm for writing because they control and interpret material. Secondly, the collected stories, both displayed and read by the class, earn peer recognition and approval. Third, the assignment motivates the students, because of their writing skills. Fourth, the activity introduces them as writers and readers to the structure of literature. In addition, the creative composition reflects the student's awareness of myth and the modern world. Last, the assignment provides a catalyst for discussion about the psychological implications of fairy tales—how they educate, support and liberate the emotions of children. Bruno Bettelheim suggests that the great fairy tales are an invaluable source of esthetic pleasure and emotional and moral sustenance for children.

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Ohio Writing Project: Community Based Writing — E. Ann Johnson

Community based writing and/or oral history, as it is often called, is a means of preserving the spoken through the written language. It is a means of recording history and events of people, their families, their community and the geography and architecture of an area.

The process is one of identifying an individual who will share and/or an event to be shared, interviewing the source person, editing, revising and producing the interview for readers. Depending on the form of the final production, the process may include problems of financing, maintaining equipment and producing (layout, typing, illustrating, collating).

Community based writing capitalizes on the immediate experiences of the writer but also offers opportunities to expand writing beyond the immediate, and even the extended family, into the community and beyond. Examples of community based writing are available in published and unpublished form by professional and nonprofessional writers. The Foxfire books are now available in six volumes and have sold more than four million copies; the work of Studs Terkel, *Hard Times, Working* and *American Dreams: Lost and Found,* and publications of historical groups are only a few examples of professional publications. In 1975 there were 145 published journals representing many racial, ethnic and geographical areas of the United States and stemming from some in-class writing project at the junior high or high school level.

Initiating a community based writing project can be as simple as making a one-time class assignment to interview a family member or a neighbor and write a recollection of the conversation. When beginning any project, simplicity is the keyword. A project can reach magnanimous proportions but should begin on a well-structured, simple tone, easily handled by student and teacher.

Interviewing and notetaking should be practiced in the classroom. Some of the interviews can be completed within the school by asking people to be interviewed by the total class; questions, of course, being prepared prior to the interview. Interviewers should be alerted to the "serendipity" moment; the sudden and unexpected occurrence that opens up new channels, fresh ideas during the interview.

The editing should be a shared response, either by the total class or in small in-class groups.

The concept of community based writing could be as part of a course, or a course in and of itself, and/or a summer school enrichment activity, a Young Authors' or Young Writers' project or a project for a creative writing club. Wherever it is used, or to what extent: a single assignment or a published anthology, the concept of community based writing provides countless topics and forms of expression for writers of any age and level of experience.

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Revise Before Editing—Paul Eschholz

"How can I get my students to revise?" This is the one question that high school teachers of writing seem to ask me most often. And there is no simple answer. Revision is perhaps the most difficult stage of the writing process to teach because it is at this stage that so much can happen. It is during revision that writers make discoveries about their subjects, change the focus of their essays, decide that they need another more appropriate rhetorical strategy, remember examples that were missing in the rough draft, etc., etc., etc. Unfortunately, however, student writers are often stymied by revision—confused about exactly what revision means. For many, revision is editing; it means to "copy over"—to correct the careless mechanical errors that the teacher has marked on the rough draft.

This mistaken notion results most often when teachers have emphasized product over process. And emphasis on the product usually causes problems with the process. All of us know or remember teachers who emphasize the grading of papers—really the editing and proofreading of those papers—as the way to teach writing. They would cast a suspicious eye on a paper, gleefully spot the obvious errors, mask that glee with mock groans, and downgrade the student for egregious errors of agreement or spelling. Their students are a traumatized bunch. They are the students who try to tackle all aspects of a writing project simultaneously. They worry about organization of ideas, spelling, factual information, clear expression, footnote and bibliography form as well as format all before writing the first sentence of what should be an exploratory rough draft.

To help students get more out of writing—and especially the process of revision—I offer the following advice based upon classroom experiences with over 230 Vermont high school teachers who have participated in the NEH Vermont Writing Program during the past five years.

1. Don't accept rough drafts as finished products.

As a society we have come to accept rough drafts as finished products. Rarely do we take the time to read what we have written to see that we've said what we want to say. Students are no different. Teachers report that once their students have finished a rough draft they feel that the writing is done. Students say they "like it" or they "don't want to change a thing." Just because students say they like it is no reason to accept a rough draft. Too often they don't know what they can change. Have them put the rough draft in their writing folder so they can return to it at a later date. Patience is the key—don't force revision. Revision will come when the writer is ready to revise.

2. Create a classroom atmosphere that encourages revision.

Teachers should create a classroom atmosphere in which revision is encouraged—not required. The workshop-conference model seems to work well. The majority of class time is spent writing. Periodically, students sign up for brief 2 to 3 minute conferences to talk about each of their successive drafts. Students are not slow to realize that with the individualized conference approach they have an opportunity to experiment, to explore, to correct failures on successive drafts without penalty—an opportunity rarely afforded them before. Students should not be rewarded for rewriting, but neither should they be punished for it. Students who formerly believed that writing had to be perfect the first time soon accept revision as a normal condition of writing. They no longer feel uncomfortable starting all over again, talking about a shortcoming in a paper, using an eraser, or crossing out and writing between the lines. As Don Murray explains, "All writing is experimental, and therefore the writing course must be failure-centered, or at least failure accepting, for trial and error is the process of discovery through which subject, form, and language are found." Once this tone is set, revision is inevitable.

3. Define revision and demonstrate its value.

In helping students to understand the writing process, teachers should take the mystery out of revision. Basically, revision is a simple process with only four options: writers can make additions, make deletions, make substitutions, or reorder information. Once students see this they begin to believe that they can revise. In addition teachers should *show* students that revision involves more than correcting misspellings and getting the margins straight. If writing is indeed rewriting, students need to be convinced of that fact. Teachers must

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continually remind students of the value of revision and the many possible directions that such revision can take. Professional writers know that rewriting is not punsihment, but students do not. Students need to realize that revision is an essential part of the process of using language to discover meaning. Always take the time to applaud students who have achieved success with revision. Let them share their revisions with the class. Other students learn much from such models.

4. Encourage students to read their papers aloud.

It is important that student writers be given the opportunity to read their papers aloud. As a matter of fact, a good way to start conferences is by having students read their essays to you. For many, it will be the first time they have read their piece since they have written it. Reading aloud is a terrific way to initiate revision. Students invariably start revising while they're reading—crossing out sentences, marking places where material should be added, questioning logic. And as students get more involved in and/or committed to a piece of writing, the more they want to read it aloud to see how it sounds.

5. Instill students with confidence in their ability to diagnose their own writing problems.

Students are often dissatisfied with rough drafts and can tell you in layman's terms what is wrong with them. They welcome the opportunity to talk about these drafts in a conference. During the conference the teacher questions each student in an effort to help the student specifically diagnose his or her own writing problem. The aim in the final analysis is to train students to ask certain questions of themselves while writing. After all, writers who carry on a running dialogue with themselves as they write discover what it is they are trying to say and how they should say it. For example, writers might ask themselves:

What am I trying to say in this essay?
Is it worthwhile saying?
What do I hope my reader will do after reading my essay?
Do I have accurate information?
Do I have enough information to satisfy my readers? Too much information?
How have I organized my essay? Could it be more effectively organized?
What part(s) gave me the most trouble while writing? Why?
Have I assessed my audience correctly?
Is the rhetorical strategy—narration, for example—appropriate for my subject and purpose?

If answered thoroughly and honestly, these questions will help the writer decide the direction in which revision should go. The questions are also useful for peer evaluation during the revision process.

It is through this process of questioning themselves, I feel, that students begin to recognize revision as that stage in composition when writers assume full control over the piece in progress, making substantive changes both to satisfy themselves and to more closely suit the piece to its intended audience.

6. Talk with students about what they do when they revise.

Students need time to reflect on what it is they do when they revise. It is important for them to perceive themselves as writers and to articulate what they feel and go through when they write. You should encourage students to discuss the following questions: How do you know what to revise? How do you know when you are ready to revise? How do you go about actually revising? How do you know when you've revised too much? How do you know when you have gone off in the wrong direction? Answers to these and similar questions permit students to come to a better understanding of themselves as writers—and when they better understand themselves and their ways they become better, more efficient writers.

7. Write along with your students and share your writing with them.

Good writing teachers must be active writers themselves. Such teachers not only provide an excellent model for their students, but also experience on a day-to-day basis the process of writing. In this way teachers can better understand the students' difficulties—difficulties that are often hard to sympathize with without constant writing practice oneself—and teachers can better coach them to improvement. By participating in a writing workshop, teachers in the NEH Vermont Writing Program convinced themselves that teachers who want to teach writing must write. Help dispel the myth that English teachers can write more easily than other people. Students are encouraged when they realize that even their English teacher's rough drafts need revision.

To build your confidence as a teacher of writing

and your students' confidence as writers, share your writing with the class. Sharing your writing with students enables you to *show* them how they can revise instead of *telling* them how to. In an early draft of an essay I wrote some time ago about children and television, the following paragraph appeared:

> Our experiment started two months ago. While Billy, Sarah, and Ricky were at school and Karen, our three-year-old, was thoroughly occupied with a Christmas toy, my wife packed up the television and put it in an upstairs closet. I guess our children's TV habits were not unusual—"Sesame Street," "Mr. Rodger's Neighborhood," and "The Electric Company" before supper and several hours of situation comedy and violence after supper. On Saturday mornings instead of sleeping in they rise at 6:30 so as not to miss any of the cartoons and assorted trash aired at that time. I can't remember what first caused our concern about television, but Marie Winn's *The Plug-In Drug* convinced us that a decisive action was called for.

In another version, I tried to be more formal and argumentative:

> Television programming, especially during prime time hours, alarms many American parents. One need only look at the cover story of a recent issue of NEWSWEEK to learn of the growing controversy over sex on television. Recently the national PTA released its findings in a study of violence on television. To most parents' surprise, some of the children's favorites—"The Incredible Hulk," "The Dukes of Hazard," "Magnum PI," and "Charlie's Angels"—were found to be most objectionable because of the high incidence of violence on each show. Many parents find that the only alternative to selective viewing, which may be more trouble than it is worth, is to put the television away, away permanently.

The selection of one version over the other of course depends upon my audience and intended purpose. After seeing the two versions, my students seemed to be more relaxed with revision. A similar thing happened with "leads." After seeing how differently several of my leads appealed to readers, they seemed willing to experiment with their own leads, often producing six to ten for a single paper.

8. Use prose models as needed for revision.

During the revision process students who have identified their own problems can benefit from reading other's writing. Writers can best learn from what other writers have done when they find themselves in similiar situations. The number of ways that prose models can be used in the revision process is endless. If a student continues to have difficulty using specific information, I have found it useful to have the student read a paragraph or two that rely heavily on specific details, underlining each piece of specific information encountered. I then ask the student to compile a list of specific information that could be used in writing his or her own essay. I have experienced some success in using paragraph-length models to help students work on their openings, use figurative language to enhance a description, show and not tell, give full examples to support a generalization, and develop unified paragraphs. As students get closer to a final draft, their attention begins to focus on the little things that make a difference. Difficulties with transitions, diction, dramatic short sentences, parallel structure, and strong action verbs, for example, can be easily handled with short prose models. Students report that prose models are helpful in solving their writing problems.

9. Carefully separate matters of revision from matters of editing.

Editing is important but it must be considered at its proper time—the end of the writing process. Avoid matters of editing in early conference sessions. Attention should be given to such areas as focusing of subject, purpose, use of examples, audience, rhetorical strategy, troublesome passages and other matters of this order. It has been my experience that as soon as discussion turns to points of grammar, usage, and punctuation, *revision* ceases. To mark or to discuss points of editing or proofreading on an early draft is to limit the range of possibilities—to discourage anything but superficial polishing. When no other questions are raised first, students readily assume that everything about their papers is O.K. Students seem more receptive to the notion of major changes when they have not already invested time and effort correcting a paper that needs to be significantly altered or scrapped in favor of a new focus or subject.

It is only when students near the completion of a writing project that they should turn their attention to the surface of their prose. Only after they are sure they have said what they wanted to say—should they correct points of usage, grammar, punctuation, or spelling.

"Skills"—Do They Exist?—John Downing

In a book that was recently completed, an attempt was made to apply all areas of psychological theory and research to the problems of learning to read. In searching the literature to determine to what category of behavior reading belongs we found that many psychologists have referred to reading as "a skill". To check this, we summarized the psychological research literature about skill learning in general and arrived at a list of 21 commonly stated characteristics. Then we searched the literature of descriptions of reading behavior to see if they matched the 21 characteristics of skill in general. We found that "the fit is very good, and, therefore, we conclude we can apply with confidence what psychological research has found about skill acquisition in general to learning to read in particular" (Downing and Leong, 1982).

What do psychologists mean when they refer to "a skill"? One comprehensive and eclectic definition is provided by McDonald (1965). He writes that "From a psychological point of view, playing football or chess or using a typewriter or the English language correctly demands complex sets of responses—some of them cognitive, some attitudinal, and some manipulative". McDonald takes as an example "skill" in playing baseball, and he points to the player's need "to perform sets of responses with ease, quickness and economy of motion". But McDonald emphasizes that it is not merely a matter of motor behavior. The player "must also *understand*" the game and must like playing the game and have appropriate attitudes about winning and sportsmanship." The total performance ... is a complex set of processes—cognitive, attitudinal, and manipulative. This complex integration of processes is what we usually mean when we refer to 'skill'..." (p. 387).

This is a typical psychologist's definition of "skill." It is very far removed from the vague ambiguous meaning of the word "skills" found in American and Canadian educational books and articles on writing and reading instruction in the 1970's and 1980's. Indeed the word "skills" has been so over-used to signify so many different things that it has almost lost any real meaning in North American English. This abuse is not merely a matter of terminology. Psychologists do have technical terms for a part of a skill. These are "subskills" or "subroutines." But what many American and Canadian writers call "skills" cannot be made respectable by relabelling them "subskills" or "subroutines." These bits of alleged behavior mostly have no basis in objective data from studies of actual reading behavior. In other words, these so called "reading skills" or "writing skills" are largely mythical (See for example, Samuels, 1976; Stennet, Smythe and Hardy, 1975; McNeil, 1974).

But even if we could identify the true subskills of reading we ought not to attempt to teach them in isolation as is customary in the traditional "skills" teaching methodology. Psychological research on the acquisition of a skill shows the futility of such teaching methods. McDonald writes of skill development in general: "If a pattern is broken up into discrete responses to be practiced separately, the individual responses may be practiced in a way in which they will never be used." Then the danger is created "that the learner may never see the importance of integrating these responses" (p. 413). In other words, the learner of a skill must attempt to approximate the skilled act as a whole from the very beginning. One learns the skill of chess by playing chess, one learns the skill of fishing by fishing, one learns to talk by talking, and so one learns to read and write by reading and writing. At every step of the way progress is made by approximating the integrated whole skill.

Luria (1976), with characteristic insight, describes how, from the very beginning in learning a skill at school, the child always attempts this integration in building up a logical schema for solving a problem:

> Every familiar school problem constitutes a complex psychological structure in which the final goal (formulated as the problem's question) is determined by specific conditions. Only by analyzing these conditions can the student establish the necessary relations between the components of the structure in question: he isolates the essential ones and disregards the inessential ones. *By getting a preliminary fix* on the problem's conditions, the student formulates a general strategy for its solution; in other words, he creates a general logical schema that determines the direction for further search. The schema in turn determines the reasoning tactics and the choice of operations that can lead to the making of a decision. Once this is done, the student moves on to the last stage, merging the results with the specified conditions. If the results

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> are in agreement, he is finished; if any of the conditions remain unmet and the results disagree with the initial conditions, the search for the necessary solution continues (pp. 117-118, italics added).

Bruner (1971) emphasizes problem solving and the holistic nature of skill development when he writes: "In broad outline, skilled action requires recognizing the features of a task, its goal, and means appropriate to its attainment; a means of converting this information into appropriate action, and a means of getting feedback that compares the objective sought with present state attained" (p 112).

In summary, reading is a skill, writing is a skill. The key feature of a skill is the process of integrating the complex set of behaviors that go to make the total pattern. Integration is learned through practice. Practice in integration is only supplied by performing the whole skill or as much as is a part of the learner's "preliminary fix." This explains Bamberger's (1976) paradox:

> Many children do not read books because they cannot read well enough. They cannot read well because they do not read books (p. 61).

It also explains why, in general, children seem to learn to read by almost any method. Singer (1966) states that "Children have learned to read by means of a wide variety of methods and materials... However, all the necessary elements for reading are present in the materials employed by each method so that pupils in learning to read through any of these methods could have used their capabilities for selecting their own unit of perception, their own conceptualized mediational response systems, and developed their own mental organization for attaining speed and power of reading" (pp. 116-117).

In other words, reading is a skill, and, therefore, no matter what framework of teaching methods and materials we set reading in, its essential psychological features assert themselves. The brain processes that determine the course of skill development operate constantly in learners despite the variety of methods and materials used in reading instruction. As Hoskisson (1975) puts it: "Perhaps one of education's greatest delusions is that we teach children to read. All that may really occur is that materials are presented to a child in one form or another and he uses them to solve the reading problem" (p. 446).

These remarks should not be misunderstood as negative cynicism about teaching methods and materials. On the contrary, teachers, their methods and their materials do make a difference in children's success and failure in learning to read and write. They make their difference to the extent that they approximate the natural course of skill development. As Henderson (1980) has pointed out, what children can learn "depends upon the conceptual frame they bring to the task. Where instruction is paced to the child's underlying, conceptual grasp almost any methodology is likely to succeed. Where this state of mind is violated or overreached, almost any method is likely to fail and lead to difficulty" (p. 2). This is the modern concept of reading readiness—"fitting reading to the child" that we have described elsewhere (Downing and Thackray, 1975). Thus it is of paramount importance for us to study the child's development of those concepts that are used in thinking about the skill of reading and the skill of writing

Children's Concepts of Spoken and Written Language

Fitts' (1962) review of the research on skill learning in general led him to conclude that there are three phases in the development of any skill. These may be termed the "cognitive," "mastering" and "automaticity" phases. They occur in that order, although, of course, they are really one continuous process without any distinct boundary between them. Furthermore, it should be noted that, in a very complex skill such as writing or reading, these three phases continually recur as the learner meets each new subskill during the many years needed to become a fully skilled reader or writer.

The initial *cognitive phase* is when the learner, according to Cronbach (1977, p. 396) "in an unfamiliar situation must find out what to do." Thus the beginner "is getting in mind just what is to be done" (p. 398). Therefore in teaching a skill it is important that the task should be clearly understandable in the initial stages. The results of research on learning to fly a plane, for example, showed that the average number of hours needed to learn to fly solo was reduced from eight to four when special attention was given to helping students to understand their tasks (Williams and Flexman, 1949; Flexman, Matheny, and Brown, 1950). The usual length of this phase in adults is comparatively brief—a few hours or days, but it may be much longer in children learning to read.

In the *mastering phase*, learners work to perfect

their performance of the skill. They practice until they achieve a high level of accuracy with practically no errors. This stage may last for days, months, or even years depending on the complexity of the skill and opportunities for practice.

But even when the skill has been mastered there remains a very important stage ahead. This is the *automaticity phase* which comes about through overlearning (practice beyond the point of mastery). When this is accomplished, expert performers can run through the skill behavior effortlessly, without error—automatically. They continue to do so, except when some unusual problem arises that makes it necessary for them to become conscious of their activities again.

As was mentioned above, these three phases of skill development recur whenever some new subskill in a complex skill has to be acquired. But, it is in the initial stage of learning a complex skill that a large number of new subskills must be faced all at once. Therefore, the cognitive aspect of skill acquisition is especially significant in the child's first weeks and months of writing or reading instruction. If children fail to comprehend their instruction in the beginning stage, then they cannot move on to the mastering phase. They remain trapped in the cognitive phase and may lose faith in their own ability to understand what they are supposed to do in reading or writing lessons. From these considerations, it becomes clear that the cognitive aspect of developing the skill of writing or reading is of utmost importance.

This conclusion was first given prominence by Vernon (1957) in her very extensive and thoroughly critical review of research on the causes of reading disability. She concluded that "The fundamental and basic characteristic of reading disability appears to be cognitive confusion..." (p. 71). Vernon wrote that "the fundamental trouble appears to be a failure in development of this reasoning process" (p. 48). She described the cognitively confused child as being "hopelessly uncertain and confused" as to why certain successions of printed letters should correspond to certain phonetic sounds in words. In her more recent extension of her survey of research on reading disability, Vernon (1971) develops this theme further:

> It would seem that in learning to read it is essential for the child to realize and understand the fundamental generalization that in alphabetic writing all words are represented by combinations of a limited number of visual symbols. Thus it is possible to present a very large vocabulary of spoken words in an economical manner which requires the memorizing of a comparatively small number of printed symbols and their associated sounds. But a thorough grasp of this principle necessitates a fairly advanced stage of conceptual reasoning, since this type of organization differs fundamentally from any previously encountered by children in their normal environment (p. 79).

With regard to simple associationistic views of learning the letter/sound code, Vernon asserts: "The employment of reasoning is almost certainly involved in understanding the variable associations between printed and sounded letters. It might appear that certain writers suppose that these associations may be acquired through rote learning. But even if this is possible with very simple letter-phoneme associations, the more complex associations and the correct application of the rules of spelling necessitate intelligent comprehension" (p. 82).

The insight gained from Vernon's studies of reading disability is that learning to read and write is essentially a problem-solving task in which the child applies reasoning abilities to understanding the communicative and linguistic relationships between speech and writing. Cognitive confusion is the chief symptom of reading disability, according to Vernon. Therefore, if we generalize from her finding, we can postulate that cognitive clarity should be the typical characteristic of the successful reader. But, of course, we should not expect perfect cognitive clarity about the reading task from the beginning. Indeed, Vernon (1957) likened the cognitive confusion of the older reading disabled child to the state of the beginner. Possibly the word "confusion" may be distasteful to educators of young children. It may seem to imply a negative evaluation of a child who has as yet had little opportunity to achieve cognitive clarity about literacy tasks. But the term "confusion" is purely descriptive. The child must perceive his or her own lack of understanding to be stimulated to solve the problem it presents.

These considerations led the present author to put forward the "cognitive clarity theory" of the acquisition of reading skill in the book *Reading and Reasoning*, from which the following summary is quoted:

> (1) Writing or print in any language is a visible code for those aspects of speech that were

accessible to the linguistic awareness of the creators of that code or writing system; (2) this linguistic awareness of the creators of a writing system included simultaneous awareness of the communicative function of language and certain features of spoken language that are accessible to the speaker-hearer for logical analysis; (3) the learning-to-read process consists in the rediscovery of (a) the functions and (b) the coding rules of the writing system; (4) their rediscovery depends on the learner's linguistic awareness of the same features of communication and language as were accessible to the creators of the writing system; (5) children approach the tasks of reading instruction in a normal state of cognitive confusion about the purposes and technical features of language; (6) under reasonably good conditions, children work themselves out of the initial state of cognitive confusion into increasing cognitive clarity about the functions and features of language; (7) although the initial stage of literacy acquisition is the most vital one, cognitive confusion continues to arise and then, in turn, give way to cognitive clarity throughout the later stages of education as new subskills are added to the student's repertory; (8) the cognitive clarity theory applies to all languages and writing systems. The communication aspect is universal, but the technical coding rules differ from one language to another (Downing, 1979 p. 37).

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Practical Application

General Sessions

Contexts for Writing—Martha L. King

The eternal problem we all face in teaching writing is *how to get children to do it!* It's a difficult task and one that has little appeal for either children or adults. The longer children attend school the less they enjoy writing. The National Assessment of Educational Progress *Newsletter* reports a steady decline in the enjoyment of writing by students 9 years to 17 years old ("No Major Changes Seen in Writing Skills," 1980-81).

On the other hand, very young children, who are around where people are using paper and pencil, or a typewriter, are eager to write. They want to make a grocery list when mother is making hers and to put a note in the letter or birthday card to grandmother. They want desperately to know how to write their names and names of brothers and sisters.

Why is in-school writing so difficult? Why do many children turn away from it, never to take that path again? Consider what happens to many children during their early years in schools and what they are asked to do. They spend their time in readiness tasks, reading groups, completing ditto sheets and reading workbook exercises. Later, they may spend hours on end with spelling lists, in writing complete sentences, and in learning to put capital letters and punctuation in the right places. The goal of all such ingrained practices is to help children to become literate, but to a great extent, the outcome is people who resist reading and writing with both great cunning and skill.

The problem arises from the fact that literacy learning in school has been decontextualized; that is, reading and writing have been removed from the real world of experience and practice exercises put in their places. Though children are skillful language learners, their expertise lies in learning language through *use* in meaningful situations. To remedy the situation, we need to think about what writing *is for* and what it *does* for people. What does it do for adults and what *can* it *do* for children?

Obviously, writing serves us all in very practical ways—shopping lists, notes to friends and relatives, and sometimes in diary writing or correspondence related to business matters. Very few of us write stories or poetry for pleasure or persuasive letters and articles expressing opinion of matters that affect our lives. Why? When we consider our own writing, or lack of it, what causes problems? Essentially, it comes down to having *something to say* and *knowing how to say it* in *visual* language. Once we begin to write, we recognize that our production is hampered by much more than spelling, grammar, punctuation or capitalization. Though these skills help in constructing a draft efficiently, they are less useful in the generation and organization of ideas. This knowledge comes from a different kind of experience.

Supposing that children's experience with writing in school began with these two key concerns: *what* to say and *how* to say it. The curriculum, then, would need to be organized around situations where children were learning about things of importance and interest, finding in the process the need to write, and learning how to express meanings in writing as they were doing it! Such circumstance would help children over the first great hurdle of having something to say, and the second difficulty—how to say it—would be alleviated as children developed their own purposes for action within a meaningful situation. Perhaps these concepts are best understood through examples in which children were able to find power and purpose in writing as they were involved in worthwhile experiences which they enjoyed, but which none the less produced good writing.

Context One: Drama Corner

The first example focuses on the home or drama corner which is found in most good kindergarten and first grade classrooms. Generally, the play in these areas changes locus from time to time, going from home and cooking to become a doctor's office and treating sick people, to the corner garage servicing automobiles. In this illustration the setting for the dramatic actions was a restaurant. The stove, sink and refrigerator (of the home) formed the kitchen where food was prepared and two small tables and chairs became the main dining area. After the physical layout was established, the children had to consider what food they were going to serve and what would they charge for each item.

Pretend food was made—potato chips from yellow paper, hamburgers, buns and pastries from flour and salt dough; all items were painted to look real. Next, of course, there was a need for a

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menu—and writing began.

Some children remembered seeing on the tables and walls of restaurants signs that advertised particular dishes or specials of the day which led to their creating advertisements for Jello, milkshakes or scrambled eggs. For example, one ad was a collage picture showing a glamorous girl with long flowing black hair giving her testimony to LOVELY, WOBBLY JELLY.

Writing menus, preparing food and serving customers as they played "Restaurant" allowed the children to use the very specialized language of the restaurant world. As the play progressed children were doing more and more specific things related to restaurant life and began to "play" with language. They decided to make their own simple dinner plates with decorations around the edges. These were further embellished in the center on a special flap that said, "Guess what I am eating?" Underneath the flap was the answer *in writing:*

"I am eating chips with dead caterpillars."

They also made cutouts of stemmed glasses with contents showing through and with the question: Guess what I am drinking?

"Thick sluggy toothpaste"
"Mud and a flower"
"Yellow horrible petrol"
"Thick red oil and green snakes"
"Lemonade spiders"

Children know that patrons often have to wait in a restaurant, so they wrote a simple newspaper

Home News

The boy who was Bitten by a dog

A boy was bitten by a dog
On his arm and his leg
And he went to hospital
And he had a plaster
On his leg and his arm
His name is Russell
The boy had a yellow toy
Trolley and then the dog
Ran up to the boy and Bit
Him he is only 7 years old
He is out of hospital now

By Yvonne.

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called THE PLANET, just one issue, for the customers to read. Articles were about what was happening in school: *Moving, The Dogs Escape, The Girl Who Got Knocked Over.*

When the children tired of the restaurant, the space was transformed into a hospital where there were sick dolls to be cared for and entertained. Naturally, stories were needed, so small books with fiction stories were written, carefully bound and made available for the "nurses" and others to read aloud. For example,

Getting Lost in the Zoo
I was lost in the Zoo
and I was unhappy
and I couldn't find my mom
I looked in the monkey's cage
But she wasn't there
I looked in the elephant's trunk
But she wasn't there
I looked in the Leopard's mouth
But she wasn't there
I got lost mom
and I've found you
Thank goodness!
We all went home together

We see in this context children moving into writing gradually in a particular and meaningful way, not unlike the way they had learned to talk. Their attention was on *what they wanted to say*—not on writing itself, and therefore they knew how to say it—in what form to write—because they were well aware of their purpose and fictional audiences. Writing was employed to carry the message and served as a tool in accomplishing a task. It *supported* the play throughout; but when the children began making advertisements and decorating plates and gobblets, they also began to "play" with language. The writing in these instances was centered on the language itself as children had fun contriving—playing—with new kinds of messages.

The teacher in this illustration had not planned ahead to organize a restaurant in the home corner. She didn't make lesson plans for it nor write behavioral objectives; however, she seized the opportunity when it occurred to join the children in their play and to make the most of it! Thus, the play was enriched and literacy extended even though the writing was a by-product of the play—not the central focus.

Context Two: A Class of Seven-and Eight-Year-Olds

The second scene is a class of 7-and 8-year-olds, where the teacher organizes the environment—the time, space, materials and working procedures—to promote a definite learning process in which language is an integral part. The room is rich in concrete resources—numerous collections and displays to challenge children's interests. Specimens of insects and plants were regularly brought into the room so the children could observe them closely and repeatedly. Storage cabinets contained collections of shells, pine cones, seaweed and fossils—many gathered by the teacher, or the children themselves. In other drawers there were skulls and bones of small animals that the children could observe, sort and try to reconstruct. Around the room were different kinds of plants and grasses—sheaves of wheat, dried bamboo, thin tall grasses, a prickly cactus and a smooth broad-leafed Maranta plant—all carefully chosen because of some particular characteristic. The unusual Maranta plant with its dark shiny leaves broken by stripes of light green and red had been the subject of several children's art work, represented in a collage of balsa wood, a water color, and a clay scupture.

There were collections of rocks, interesting old bottles, and in the autumn there was an assortment of dried herbs and seeds. All were attractively displayed and easily available to use and study. Children were encouraged to observe items very closely, to use a magnifying glass if needed, and to sort, rearrange or compare items where such activity was appropriate. They were expected to represent their observations in some way—through sketching, making notes or talking over their ideas with the teacher and classmates. Many good reference books were available to consult for further information as observations were underway.

When the class went for walks in the park nearby, children were directed to look closely at interesting plants or for signs of animals. There was concern that they should become interested in their natural environment to get accurate information about it.

On a walk near the school a child found some nettles bearing interesting looking eggs which they placed in the vivarium in their room. Of course, over a period of time there was considerable observation and tremendous excitement when caterpillars were hatched. Some children made notes of their observations or wrote longer descriptions. Following are three pieces written by Vevene.

First, a very short record:

My Caterpillar

My caterpillar has got big and long. He doesn't like the sun so he puts the leaves together and goes to sleep and curls himself up.

Second, a more detailed description showing some information input from the teacher and an informational book:

A Caterpillar

I have got two caterpillars. One is brown, I drew the brown one. The brown one is a looper, it has two sucker feet at the back and three at the front of the caterpillar. He pretends that he is a twig and his face looks like a human being's face. He has not got any feet in the middle of it. It is getting very big. It is very hairy and he looks very lumpy.

And the third, inspired by a book, *The Caterpillar's Story*, which the teacher was reading, is fiction. Although it is about a caterpillar who wished he could fly, it has authentic information about caterpillars which undoubtedly came from the child's close observation of a real caterpillar and with her access to informative books.

There was once a caterpillar, He was a very sad caterpillar, he wanted to have wings, he wanted to talk to a bird but he didn't because he didn't want to be eaten up. One day the caterpillar went in a pupa. He was in it for a long time, he stayed there till June and one morning when nobody was up and the sun was about to come up the pupa opened. A big tortoise shell butterfly came out and went away.

The next piece by Dennis (8 yrs.) shows a similar interest in and knowledge of the subject matter but in addition there is evidence of his knowing how to write a story—

The Song of the Thrush

One day, a winters day a thrush was looking for some food when another bird came down
the other thrush was an unwelcomed visitor.
So the thrush fluffed up his feathers
and fought the other bird away
but best of all the thrush needed a mate
and then another thrush flew down
At first it pretended not to notice his fine colors
then she began to sing with the other thrush
they mated and laid four egges with speckles on them
When the eggs hatched the male and female had a hard task
back and fourth fetching food for the hungry mouths
the nest was
well hidden from any danger in a holly bush then one morning one by one the thrushes hopped out of the nest and began to fly
Now they were older and they did not need their parents
Next year it would be a turn for them to be parents
the nest in the holly bush was soon forgotten
and the birds slept in the trees

What is the special strength of Dennis' story? Certainly not the punctuation and capitalization because he has used both sparingly. His capitalization is interesting, however, as he tends to capitalize those temporal conjunctions that signal time: So, At first, When, Now, Next, etc. But the strength in the story lies in the way Dennis has made an interesting and *complete* story that also contains accurate information about the thrush. It has (1) a setting followed by a brief episode containing (2) a beginning and (3) a reaction; then a second beginning followed by (4) a reaction (internal response), (5) an attempt and outcome, and (6) an ending (state of equilibrium). But within this story structure, the descriptions and actions of the characters are authentic representations of the thrush in respect to how they mate, lay eggs and produce their young. Dennis also enhances the mood of the story through his use of literary language:

"One day, a winter's day—"
"unwelcomed visitor"
"back and forth fetching food"

Undoubtedly some of these words or even phrases came from the books he had read, but Dennis here is using them for his own purposes, as he weaves his imaginary tale.

Context Three: The Immediate Environment

The ordinary everyday events of life that usually go unnoticed until someone or something calls attention to them—life in the immediate vicinity of the school or the neighborhoods where children live, traffic rolling along the highway, or children waiting for parents to come home from work—all are content for thinking, talking and writing.

The school in this instance is located on a slight knoll rising above a housing project consisting of blocks of townhouses and high rise apartments—all low rent or subsidized and built to house people

who couldn't find or afford housing in the city. Opposite the school on the far side of the project near the highway is a manufacturing plant called the KLG where many of the children's parents work. After school the children often go down and wait near the gate for their parents and then walk home with them. Day after day they see the weary workers pouring out of the factory to catch the 85 Bus or to walk to their homes nearby.

The teacher of a class of nine-and ten-year-olds was concerned that the children should sharpen their powers of observing and learn to see interesting, unusual and beautiful things in the ordinary life around them. She read quantities of poetry to them and encouraged the children on such occasions to talk about their own images, to share what they observe, the sounds they hear, and their feelings about events around them. Two girls, who habitually waited for their mothers after school at the plastics plant, made notes of their impressions of the workers coming out the KLG Plant and later in school Sara (10 years) wrote

The KLG
Me and Jo went outside the KLG
We wait for the great race to begin
The big hand goes on six
Now it's half-past four
And the bell goes
And me and Jo says
On your marks
Get set, Go!
And they bumpied out of the building
They all looked tired
But some of them run to get the 85
which is across the road
And they're off
The man in the red hat is in the lead
He does look awfully tired
but he's still running
But the man with the blue jacket on
is coming up
Then just behind him is a lady
with a fur coat on
She reminds me of the bionic woman
Then they get to the finish line
The man with the red hat on came first
The lady with blue jacket on came second
And the lady in the fur coat came third
The runners-up were everybody
Except for Jo's mom and her friend
who were last
They came floating along chatting away

Sara was able to stand back from her experience, look on it as a spectator, and describe it in terms of something else she knew—a model of discourse she had in her mind. When asked about her poem, she explained that she watched horse racing on television and tried to make her poem sound like the man describing the race.

A second poem by a boy in the same class, concentrates on the highway, the A-3, that runs in front of the housing project and the KLG.

The A-3
The A-3 is a noisy place
cars going up and down
People standing at bus stops
with babies in their hands
Boys riding their bikes
and buying ice creams
People rushing out of the KLG
After they have done their work
The 85 buses are getting packed
one after one
Loads of cars stop in a traffic jam
Boys fighting on the streets
And girls picking up their mums
A child gets hurt and starts to cry
Their mums pick them up
and carry them home
That's what the A-3 is like

Deana wrote several poems about the ordinary things around her—Going to the Dentist, People in the Street, Neighbors, and her memory of the street where she used to live, in London (England).

My Road
Maggie's home's in front of the candle
Factory
Dogs walking loose on the road
Cats sitting on the walls
Kids waiting for their parents
to come home so they can go in
People rushing home from work to watch
their favorite programs
Rush hour's started, cars and lorries
rushing past our homes
Smell of the candle factory is
still here but not so strong.
The rush hour's over and the
odd car passes
But then there's a noise, sirens
heading for—Gerber's
Shouting, the excitement's gone
Everybody walks back to their
homes
This is the life in Battersea.

In writing her poem, Deana said that she started by jotting down words that described or stood for things she remembered—the noise, the odors and the traffic. Then she "just wrote what fit in best." "It doesn't have to rhyme, you know."

Context Four: A Classroom Steeped in Literature

Children listen to stories read aloud, they read stories of all kinds, and they talk about them—in small groups and in circle time with the teacher. The reading program is based in literature, the writing experience heavily influenced by stories and poetry. Whatever is being studied from butterflies in autumn to horses or chickens and eggs in the spring, a range of quality books, both fiction and informational, is brought to bear on the topic.

One autumn the whole class became caught up in a study of witches as portrayed in stories and poems the teacher was reading at the time. The starting point actually was a new edition of *Little Orphan Annie* which capitivated the children when they joined the teacher as she read the lines, "The goblins will get you if you don't watch out!"

The children, not quite sure about goblins and the like, wanted to talk about them and all the other supernatural creatures—trolls, witches and elves—that abound in children's tales. Were they real? What were they like? Were all witches alike?

More than a score of books and poems were brought to the classroom, many read aloud by the teacher and reread by the children or consulted for specific information. There was a special concentration on witches—perhaps because they were so evident in the fairy tales or because of the approach of Halloween. Starting with *Hansel and Gretel* the teacher and children read numerous stories, often versions of the same tale; for example, there were two picture book editions of *Rapunzel* and two of the witches *Jorinda and Joringel*, as well as versions of *Hansel and Gretel*. Experiencing the same story told in different ways caused the children to focus on the texts themselves. Where were they alike? Different? Which did they like best? At this point the children began to pay increasing attention to the *writing* as well as to the story content.

These children were beginning to learn about writing in the way established authors say they have learned their craft—from reading. The process is more than simply reading, however, because almost everyone reads, but very few people write. Frank Smith in his forthcoming book on *Writing and the Writer* provides insight into the matter when he explains that for reading to help writing, "one must read like a writer."

And this, in my view, was exactly what was happening in this class of 7-and 8-year-olds: they read for not only the story, but for the way writers said things. For in addition to their reading, which was extensive, the children were consistently *writing*. They became interested in how writers developed a story and the techniques they used to get from one place to another. This wasn't a situation in which the teacher was *teaching* literature or emphasizing the structure of stories over the meaning and enjoyment; but rather, one in which the young writers were able to discover what makes stories work because the teacher was exposing them to two or three different stories that were alike in some way or notably different in another. They were intrigued with certain patterns of actions they found—the usual three trials, for example, the literary devices of boiling pots, magic spells and flying brooms; they enjoyed story language of repetitions, refrains and the sound emphases in witches' words. Of course, they tried to bring these elements into their writing. It was all in fun, but became very demanding work when their stories grew to several pages in length. They liberally borrowed from the authors they were reading—the characters, content and conventions; but these were intertwined with the children's own experiences and feelings to construct stories that were their own. Eve spun an eight page tale about a witch who wanted to own a disco shop. After casting magic spells, galloping about on her broom and finally purchasing The Disco Light, the witch decides that she needs to know how to disco, and who is engaged to teach her? Eve's own music teacher who has been teaching her class folk dances!

But it was the predictable actions of the characters, the authors use of words and a host of other literary conventions that captured the children's attention. The story had to have a good beginning that caught the reader's interest and created suspense, as Jeff's story illustrates:

> Long, long ago their was a haunted mansion deep in the middle of a valley. In the haunted mansion witches made mouse tail soup. Gobblins helped the witches catch the mice for the soup.
>
> There were underground dungeons under the mansion and underground tunnels also. Because of these underground tunnels the mansion got weak. Finally the mansion collapsed under ground into the underground tunnels and dungeons—
>
> Then it looked like a hut—(The story continues

for several pages. The punctuation and spelling are Jeff's.)

In the learning process children often become so intrigued with new words or devices that they become overly explicit as Jeff was with *under, underground, dungeons* and *tunnels*. Sometimes they try too hard to have a good beginning and become overzealous in searching for an unusual word to use. Travis began his story with "Once a *extensive* time ago—." He had erased *long* because it seemed too ordinary for him. Later he wrote,

> One day there was a little girl walking down a path through a deep dark dense forest when a little girl said "I'm *unnerved*." The boy said "I am too. Let's climb the giant hill to that house." They started to *ascend* the giant mound,—

I'm not necessarily recommending that everyone study witches, but it is a topic that can be pursued in literature up through Macbeth in high school.

The experience for these children, though they worked at a high pitch for about three weeks, was primarily one of *play*.

They were playing at story writing, imitating characters, plots and actions of authors they liked; they copied illustrations and formats of books that appealed to them.

They were having *fun* being authors and illustrator, even publishers, as they wrote about good witches and bad witches and gleefully compiled cook books of Witches Recipes.

> Recipes that will Lose Your APITITE (with an illustration of a viper stretching out its tongue)
>
> Table of Contents:
> 1. Gremelda's Lemon Brew
> 2. Strega Nona's Pasta
> —
> 4. Zildy's Dilly Pie
> —
> 9. Baba Yaga's Casserole

Through their play and careful exploration of the many books carefully selected by their teacher, these children were *learning the writer's craft: how to say things in stories*. In contrast to the younger children in the home corner who were using *intuitively* what they knew about writing menus and stories for sick dolls, these seven-and eight-year-olds were consciously paying attention to the *language* and *story conventions* of books. They were disembedding the language and conventions from the story content, at their own initiation and to fulfill their own purposes.

As noted earlier, to learn to write, one needs not only to write, but to *read*—to read in a special way, to pay attention to the language of the text. Children need exposure to people who write and experience with well-written texts. Smith (in press) calls such examples demonstration and says that to learn, one must have *demonstrations* of the thing to be learned, and then be sensitive to what is demonstrated and *engaged* with the object, process, concept or skill demonstrated.

In the 4th context, *Witches*, the demonstrations were literary and focused on a single topic; in the restaurant illustration, they came from the real life experiences of the children; in the second context, the demonstrations emphasized informational writing; and the third, the context of the school near the KLG, the demonstrations came from the poetry the teacher read and her own writing. But more than exposure to good examples is required—the writer must attend to the text itself, be *sensitive to words*, savor the good description and become *engaged* with the medium as well as the message. The very fact that the children living in the housing project could link their personal experiences to the poetry heard in school helped them to become *engaged* with the teacher's "demonstrations" of poetry. They found room to share their messages along with those generated in the teacher's curriculum.

We tend to think of writing too narrowly, as something that happens one period in the day, that can be improved by practice in writing sentences with capital letters and punctuation used perfectly. But writing is *language*, operates as language, and as such is influenced by all of the social-cultural forces that are a part of situations where writing occurs; that is, what one knows, needs to say, wants to write, and is encouraged and helped to write. All factors of the situation impinge on the writing—the content, the event, the purpose for writing, as well as the attitudes and relationship of the writer's teachers and peers.

The giant step that beginning writers must take as they make the transition from interactive speech to the written mode is that of maintaining a flow of discourse alone. In their stellar success in learning to talk, children have had the continued support of a conversational partner who has listened to them, tracked their meanings, questioned, responded and filled in gaps—always intent upon clarifying the child's meanings. In writing, the most difficult part is learning to "go it alone," to express a series of ideas without feedback. But children can be helped

enormously to make the transition by skillful teachers and interested supporting peers.

As children are writing the teacher can move among them to help or they can bring their writing to her. In either case, she joins the children's efforts as they are in the *process* of writing. Thus, she can give help when children need it, when they are stuck because they can't think of the "right" word or can't decide in which direction to take the story plot. She can read through the story with the child or ask a pertinent question, "What sort of witch is she? What will she do?" Or, in another situation she might help the child recall experience, "Remember, how the caterpillar looked before his skin split?" The teacher as she reads the writing and tracks the child's thinking about it on the spot, is using a technique much like that mothers use as they help their very young children learn to sustain talk.

Children also can learn from each other if they have the opportunity to write cooperatively. Sometimes two children can work on one story and get a great deal of joy from it. In the classroom in Context Four, it was customary for children to gather in small informal groups to write their stories. Although developing individual texts, they could use their peers to test out ideas about plot direction, particular literary devices to use, or ways of saying something. One child's idea would generate a similar thought in another; and so, the stories grew with each child building his or her story alongside and with the help of a peer.

The context of the classroom can help children to overcome the two great problems in writing: *what* to say and *how* to say it. Writing can grow out of the important studies underway and the personal experiences children have to share. They can learn how to "say it" through the stories and poetry they hear and the constructive responses of their teachers and peers. They can learn to write as they acquire increasing purposes for it and practice their craft.

NOTES

The illustrations in the first three contexts came from two primary schools in the Inner London Educational Authority, United Kingdom.

The fourth context was Marlene Harbert's classroom in Upper Arlington, Ohio.

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The Process of Writing—Christine San Jose

Obviously where in the world you would most like to be right now is in your classroom. Getting teachers away from their charges is like pulling teeth. They must have some idea that they're indispensable, or something. . . .

Second in the world where you would most like to be is right here, learning (you hope) how to teach better.

But just supposing you were in the mood for a total goof-off—no money (I can't encourage you to build your dreams on money, it creates bad habits)—but supposing you really had the time, and were ripe for a goof-off. You've just poured your coffee—and you amble over to the TV—switch it on—sink into the couch. . .

Well we don't need any excuse anymore for watching daytime soap operas; we all know how much more relevant and courageous and so on they are than anything else on TV. So here you are, WATCHING SOAPS.

Let's set a scene or two.

Empathize first, if you will, please, with MARCIA.

MARCIA is just an average woman, like most of us women here. Five foot nine, 108 pounds—nicely sculpted cheek bones—hair swept back—one of those blouses that never pulls loose at the waist—MARCIA is, like us, a career woman—only, need I say, she's the associate managing director of a very large advertising agency. Probably somewhere in her forties, since she has married and marriageable children—you will remember that Felicity is married to Rupert whose second wife Amanda was actually the mother of Lucinda although her third husband's cousin Nick believes that—Anyway, MARCIA.

MARCIA is making out her grocery list—her weekly list.

Now remember, this is a highly efficient woman, time is money, she will shop *fast*—so she makes her grocery list according to the layout of the store—there are things she needs every week (that's easy: honey, cat food, juice, yogurt); staples that need replenishment this week (baking powder, brown sugar); something for a quick and easy but glamorous supper should Mark prove invitable, etc., etc., and Michael and his predilection for Italian—and if the new head of surgery—and after the play on Friday—and don't forget the coupons—and some New Food, for goodness sake, isn't there any New Food? Envision MARCIA, please—at her list—in her office—she'll be stopping by the store on her way home (actually when she has loaded her car in the parking lot a mysterious figure will arise out of the back and at gunpoint abduct her to—well, that would spoil the story for you, but I can tell you it's going to play havoc with her frozen desserts). Anyway, for now, you have your choice of 1 or 2: you can *watch* MARCIA playing the dramatic grocery list writing scene, or you can *be* MARCIA. 10 seconds, beginning now.

So who watched? Who was? Any problems?

Quick commercial: and now, back to our story . . .

And here we have:

DOMINIC. Good hair. Good chin. Good teeth—a lot of very expensive root canal, but he can obviously afford it. And take the pain. A good guy. And DOMINIC has a report to make. There's been an accident on the building site—and he has to report this to his boss, Jim, the old man. Problem: DOM suspects foul play. And he strongly suspects that the foul player is none other than—insert the name of your choice—who is none other than the old man's, Jim's, fair-haired boy, literally his beloved youngest son.

So DOM has to write the report—sort it out in his mind—he's not absolutely positive what happened, he'll have to reconstruct it in his mind—and he'll have to plant a seed in Jim's thinking—he can't antagonize him, but he has to sow sufficient doubt for an investigation to be started—

Got it? 10 seconds. And if you watched last time, this time you're DOM writing; and if last time you wrote, this time you may watch if you want to.

Very well. Two more quickies.

—Brook? —Holly? Lovely young kid, what shall we call her?—you chose. Right, DAWN. Her mother and father both dead—let's not go into the in's and out's of that one. I mean her *real* mother is dead, that is to say her biological mother—and her adoptive mother—and both the women who at one time thought they were her mother—and so on. Anyway, she's 17, she's had a rough, rough time, but she's a sweet child, terribly serious—has thrown herself into her school work—so here she sits, rather pale, terribly conscientious, she gets out her trig. book, her European history—which shall she tackle first? But then there comes back to her that moment in the hall when Peter (or Jamie or Neal or Jason) shyly told her how much he had enjoyed her flute solo—whatever. And as a ghost of a smile tries to break through she devotes herself not to her trig., not to her history—but to writing a poem! Now here is your big chance—you are DAWN, and you are writing a poem—please yourself entirely what it is about. (10 seconds for writing.)

Christine San Jose, Consultant, Deloris Kohl Education Foundation, Wilmette, Illinois.

What was your poem about?

How about finishing it during coffee break?

And a superquickie last.

Let's stick with DAWN. She has written her poem—her whole face is coming alive—and now she goes to the writing desk, takes a sheet of writing paper—and at long last she is able to write to the girl who was in the hospital room with her (that time she was in the fire, you remember), the young girl who is going blind. She recalls her very vividly. Can you see DAWN? Can you see how she is ready now to reach out to another human being? Can you see her begin the letter—

THAT'S IT. END OF GOOF-OFF.

And yes, what we were viewing was *the writing process.*

And there *was* something to view—and for you to do, when you put yourself in there—and it wasn't just moving a pen across paper. For your ten seconds you were fully occupied because *the writing process is a behavior.* It is what a *person* is doing in a *situation.* MARCIA, even with her humble grocery list, is behaving in such a way as to forward her glamorous existence. DOMINIC, as he replays the accident in his mind, as he searches for clues and relationships in what happened, as he strives to express this in words, at the same time picturing for himself what Jim's reaction will be and how that must be handled—DOMINIC is behaving in accordance with the dictates of his own character and his own needs. And how crystal clear this is with DAWN: that poem comes up out of her, is part of her—and her new awakening. And her subsequent letter comes into being as she, DAWN, the one and only DAWN, DAWN with her unique life experience (just as we are all the one and only us, each with our unique life experience)—as DAWN feels the need and the strength to reach out to someone. All these different kinds of writing—MARCIA's *practical listing,* DOMINIC's *marshalling of the facts,* DAWN's *capturing a thought or feeling that really means something to her,* and then DAWN's *establishing a bond with someone outside herself*—different kinds of writing that pretty well comprise all the kinds of writing we ever do—all these kinds of writing originate in the needs of a *person,* in a *situation.* And from that first move towards writing, through to the finished product, that is to say, throughout the writing process, the writer is a person behaving as that particular person does, guided by the needs of that particular situation.

You have heard plenty more-or-less along these lines before, of course. For some years now we have been considering *purpose* and *audience* in writing, and indeed it is our awareness of the complex, developmental interplay of the many factors involved that has us all referring these days not to "writing" but rather to "the writing process." Nevertheless, I have called upon MARCIA, DOM and DAWN this morning for their help because, for all our supposed current awareness, I think we sometimes nearly lose sight of what purpose and audience, of what all the other facets of "the writing process," essentially spring from. Perhaps it's just I who never outgrew a healthy dollop of "concrete operations" in any thinking that is to be of real use to me!—but I suspect I'm in good company. And I therefore offer you our three new acquaintances as concrete writers. And I ask you to bear in mind, with these concrete, objective examples, what you were aware of as you watched (or as you imagined yourself to be) these almost-actual persons writing. It wasn't just—or even primarily—*purpose* and *audience* of the writing, was it? And you weren't just watching the production of (or producing) a succession of formulations that would eventually reach the final form? You were aware of *a person, a total, particular person, in a particular situation.*

And that, please—with a little help from our friends—is what I think we should be aware of in the classroom as our students write. If I am to help my class (or my school or my school district) with their writing, that means that I am to help Gretchen and Josh and Manuela. And that means that I shall need all the insight I can get into Gretchen and Josh and Manuela as they write. You will remember that there was no way we could know what would be the best, that is, the most appropriate, grocery list for MARCIA until we knew something of her and her life style. Similarly for DOM and young DAWN. And the writers in our charge are no different. We need to have a very good idea of who they are, and of just what they are about, of what it means to them, if we are to know what kind of writing—indeed, writing process—is most appropriate for them.

Essentially, then, I would posit, Gretchen and Josh and Manuela writing in our classrooms are the same pen pushing (and chewing and looking and finding) animals as MARCIA, DOM and DAWN. There is, however, a variance in circumstances for us to face. MARCIA, DOM and DAWN, we saw, set about writing because they felt the need for it. Now to a certain extent this is true of our students also.

In many of our classrooms, much of the time, our students are busily pursuing both practical and academic projects (or perferably a combination of these) that are as near and dear to them as to MARCIA her efficient shopping, to DOM his job, and so on; and in the climate of literacy that we create and tend they will frequently turn to writing to further their aims. Surely this is true of *this* group herein gathered, at least. And might I beg those of you who recognize your classrooms as of this kind to observe and note carefully the writing processes going on, who writes what, when, how, why, with what aims, attitudes, results, and so on and on, because we have precious little documentation of any of this. Probably because what is true of students to a larger extent—a far larger extent—is that they write when and what they are told to. And much of the seemingly quite helpful research that we have is largely an account of how students arrive at an assigned end project. I am not in any way suggesting that we ignore this research. I love it: which writers stand up, who wanders around, who dashes off five pages, who pauses when for how long, the patterns of the electrodes that have been plugged into some of them . . . I confess I lap it all up. But I do also urge that we surely question whether the processes gone through in order to end up with an acceptable assigned final product are the same as those gone through when we have a thought or feeling that we truly wish or need to get into writing.

Sometimes we have to assign writing tasks; of course we do. Our students must learn to feel at home in a great many different kinds of writing, and of course not all of these will arise spontaneously out of their deeply felt personal wish and need, however alive their learning. But the assignments must always be such, and carried out in such a way, that our young writers invest at least a part of their real selves in what they are doing. That investment is the dynamo. Writing is terribly hard work (or you remember the sort of easy Thomas Wolfe said it was: just take a sheet of paper—and bleed); without the investment of self, without the commitment of sorting out one's thoughts even on an assigned subject for oneself as well as for some teacher or examiner, we just do not have the power to produce other than a product that is at best merely adequate. More: without that investment we just never embark on the real writing process, we just never get the feel of it, let alone ever feel at home in it, have some confidence, achieve some measure of mastery of it, because really to write is precisely to struggle to discover just what it is that we want to say, and how to say it. You can see what happens when writing in the schools is mainly a matter of furnishing an acceptable product: we have those who have learnt the superficial tricks of the trade, their thesis statement and keyhole structure and all the rest of it, and churn them out undiluted by human conviction; and those who have never grasped the knack of the acceptable maneuvers, to whom they remain as arcane and unattainable as rabbits out of a hat and women sawn in half and levitation. Among the tricky performers are many who would offer honest, original thoughts and feelings if only we could make school writing a safe place for them to explore them; and as for the "failures," many of our most perceptive, questioning and reasoning students, who may well go on to lucent achievements in other fields, have just never been helped to learn that writing consists first and foremost of sorting out what you have in your own head. Not that that isn't tough. It is, indeed, to bleed. But if you have yourself invested, and if what you stand to gain is further knowledge about yourself in your living and appropriate constructive expression of it, then the struggle is worthwhile, and you find the strength for it.

Let me sum up this first part of what I want to say this morning (two more parts to come!) by asking you to spare a thought sometimes, as you look at your student writers, for their soapy fellow toilers, MARCIA, DOMINIC and tender DAWN. And as you look at Gretchen, or Josh, or Manuela, writing and pausing and writing again, ask yourself, "Am I just looking at any old student in any old classroom fulfilling an assignment? Or is that indeed a whole person there, a person with a history and hopes and present needs, behind that pen or pencil?" And if the happy answer to that second question is "Yes," then you might even try writing a short paragraph about it; your first steps towards the script of—THE EDGE OF WRITE? THE GUIDING WRITE? (THE WRITING GUIDE?) AS THE PAGE TURNS? even, for prime time, COMMAS?

And if soaps aren't classy enough for your classroom, may I remind you of Mozart's foray into the writing process, where the unhappy countess in *The Marriage of Figaro* is dictating a letter to Susannah, a letter that will snare her erstwhile ardent husband in his current play for her pretty maid. And now the question is: How would the writing in your class stack up as arias? Could even Verdi do much with "How I Spent My Summer Holiday?" I don't mean that it all has to be heady

drama. I remember a fifth grade where the teacher was a natural science buff, and there were quail eggs in the incubator and the guinea pigs about to become a family and crystals forming in the jars on the windowsill and the children industriously filling in charts of growth and writing off for free bird seed and comparing notes on their tomato plants and putting together the class newsletter about it all for the rest of the school and parents. "I know I do good things for their science, but I feel guilty how little I know how to help them with their language development," the teacher confessed to me. But of course the writing in that classroom was a swelling contrapuntal chorus.

So much for the first part of what I wanted to say, a plea that we not forget where the writing process begins—its roots, its dynamo—choose your own metaphor—but don't forget that we start with a particular person, in his or her particular situation.

Briefly now to the second part, a glimpse of how the process develops. And since we've had television and opera to help us already, this time we'll turn to literature. Here is a scene from *Mrs. Dalloway*, by Virginia Woolf.

Lady Bruton is a very grand old lady, fitting descendant of a long line of ironsided generals, and she, like them, has a claim on her total devotion. What Lady Bruton lives for is her cause, to help the honest but needy young to emigrate to the colonies (this is the England of Empire, much much earlier in this century). At the time we meet her, this worthy, impressive, noble dame wishes to write a letter to the *London Times*, informing its readers of The Cause and enlisting their support. But Lady Bruton has a problem. She can organize and manage and lead as doughtily as her forbears who won Blenheim and Waterloo—but she cannot write. In her elegant Mayfair establishment, therefore, she is the hostess of an intimate luncheon party. She has invited Richard Dalloway, an intelligent, solid man, and also Hugh Whitwell; beautifully groomed, irreproachably tailored, serving on the fringes of Buckingham Palace. As the delectable luncheon, and the stylish gossip with it, draws to its close, Lady Bruton sets her guests about the business of writing her letter. Richard Dalloway helps her sort out just what it is she wishes to say, essays various wordings, checks back with her for accuracy and comprehensiveness of content. Hugh Whitwell, meanwhile, who has had innumerable gracious letters accepted heretofore, is burnishing Richard Dalloway's serviceable efforts, heightening vocabulary and rearranging sentences to give them the rhythm and the ring that will carry the day with the reader. "Oh that's not quite what I meant," Richard Dalloway sometimes has to remonstrate, turning to Lady Bruton for confirmation. And so back and forth, with Lady Bruton the source of what has to be said, Richard Dalloway the bridge between intention and words, and Hugh Whitwell the burnisher, the letter is written.

In the first part of what I had to say, stressing that the roots of the writing process lie in the needs of a particular person in a particular situation, I asked you to remember sometimes our old friends MARCIA and DOMINIC and DAWN as you look at each of your students writing. Now, might I suggest that as you talk with each of them about their writing, asking the questions that will help them see how they can write as well as they are possibly able, that you remember our new friends, the writing team of BRUTON, DALLOWAY and WHITWELL. At some stage during your conferences with your Gretchen, or Josh, or Manuela, you need to address your questions to the LADY BRUTON within each of them, the source of the content expressed, with your probing helping the young writer to recognize all that he or she can in fact contribute on the subject, recognizing it fully and clearly. You will also need, at some stage, to guide with your questioning the RICHARD DALLOWAY within them, helping them to view objectively whether what they have written rightly expresses the substance and organization of their thought. And you will need furthermore, probably towards the end of the writing process, to make contact with the HUGH WHITWELL within, your questions affording the writer a clearer view this time of the appropriateness and effectiveness of the specific words and syntax. It scarcely needs saying that of course the writing process within one person does not break down neatly into these three characters. There is a great deal of interaction among them, just as in fact we saw the three characters themselves conferring, back and forth. Nevertheless, each aspect is an essential part of the process, and the more we—and our students—know of the three, the more accurately we shall be able to diagnose what is going on in the writing and develop all three to the maximum.

So much for parts one and two of what I wanted to say, enlisting the aid of our glamorous electronic trio and our classy literary one respectively. Part three is very short—but the most vital. Without it, the rest has little reason for being: as indeed our six characters behave differently. Suppose MARCIA

goes to the store without making her grocery list beforehand— and backtracks around the store and misses a quarter of what she needs and saddles herself with extras she doesn't need. Suppose DOMINIC gives up on his complicated, time-consuming report, and tries to tell Jim in conversation what he has in mind—trying to make clear for himself as he goes along and to make clear and memorable for Jim the complex sequence of events, endeavoring at the same time to convey subtly but inescapably the part played by the blue-eyed boy. Suppose DAWN is too task-oriented to write her poem, much less her letter, and cracks her trig. book without a second thought for them. Suppose LADY BRUTON gives up on her letter to THE TIMES, and never invites RICHARD DALLOWAY or HUGH WHITWELL to help her; or suppose she wants help with her letter and issues the invitations but both or either of them do not come. Or choke on their smoked salmon instead of getting down to business. In each example we see that the writing is not inevitable. Our characters *could* behave differently. They *could* each survive without the writing—*but not nearly so well*. Their friends, relations and colleagues, too, would feel the loss. So above all grant our characters a permanent little lodging in your mind from which to ask you, constantly, "Are your Gretchens and Joshes and Manuelas going to grow up to *want* to write? After their time with you, are they going to turn to writing like an old—though demanding—friend, who will help them with their living? For what is the good of their mastering the writing process start to finish, first little seed to full flower," they may nag you, "if then they never use it?"

The writing process, then, is empowered by the needs of a particular person in a particular situation. It goes forward by constant checking back and forth between needs and final expression. And for all of us, for MARCIA and DOMINIC and DAWN, for LADY BRUTON, RICHARD DALLOWAY and HUGH WHITWELL, for Gretchen, Josh and Manuela, and for all of us in the room and for all our students, it is a tremendous help in our living, both as individuals and as members of our society; and we would do well to do all we can to encourage ourselves and others to make the most of it.

Business Writing: Observations and Implications for Teaching Composition—Lee Odell*

It is now popular and, apparently, profitable to lament the wretched quality of writing done in business and government. Edwin Newman, for example, surely has done well by writing books and making television appearances in which he delights and horrifies us with examples of inept or deceitful writing. A casual look at some business writing may seem to confirm our worst suspicions. Consider the following examples. The first is excerpted from a memo written by a bookkeeper in an insurance company; the bookkeeper is telling an agent why the agent received less commission than he expected.

> When we have a lapse, cancellation or NSF less than 6 months in force we reverse those contracts off advances. If one pays six months only and lapses we do not. Therefore, the three months advanced over a six month lapse sort of equals out the ones which pay any premium at all then cancel, lapse or NSF and we charge back.

Granted, this is only an excerpt, but the rest of the memo does not clarify any of this passage. For example, nothing in the rest of the letter would help the reader understand what happens when "three months (are) advanced over a six month lapse." One may guess that, in this context, *NSF* means *nonsufficient funds*. But I was a little perplexed to find NSF used as a verb, as it apparently is in the phrase "cancel, lapse or NSF."

Another troublesome piece of writing comes from the insurance company where the bookkeeper works. Apparently, one way insurance companies make money is, in effect, to lend money to banks. Banks in turn lend this money to their customers. When the banks' customers repay the loans, a large chunk of principal and interest is passed back to the insurance company. The following letter confirms an insurance company's willingness to make one of these loans to a bank.

> Re: Mortgage Loan No. _____
> Dear _____:
> This letter will serve as our commitment for our participation in the above mortgage loan. It is our understanding that this loan is to be for $185,000, with our participation to be 90 percent or $165,000 for 10 years to net us 9¼ percent [interest].
> Sincerely yours,

The person who showed me this letter had in his file other letters almost exactly like this one. Some of the details varied from letter to letter. But otherwise, writing these letters was simply a matter of using a standard form and filling in certain blanks to suit the occasion: "This loan is in the amount of _____ to be paid back over a period of _____ years at an interest rate of _____ percent." One could program a computer to compose such a letter.

One final example of business writing appeared on the cover of a catalogue distributed by a company that publishes a widely used series of standardized tests.

> The prices listed herein conform with the provisions of the Executive Order stabilizing prices, wages and rents announced on August 15, 1971, and subsequent implementing orders and directives. Planned price adjustments for 1971 have been temporarily suspended.

This was not written by a computer, but it might as well have been. It has all the warmth of an anonymous voice coming over a public address system. The passage is lifeless and abstract, and it obscures as much information as it conveys. For example, the phrase *price adjustment* allows the possibility of price decreases as well as increases. But I doubt that "planned price adjustments" included substantial reductions in prices.

In some respects, these pieces of writing might appear to justify our misgivings about writing that is done in business. Such writing may entail a highly specialized use of language that is intelligible only to a very limited audience. It may require little more than the mindless use of a formula, or suffer from a bland impersonality of style. It may exhibit all of these qualities simultaneously.

These three pieces of writing have been emphasized so as not to oversimplify or to ignore problems that exist. Yet in the remainder of this

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article it will be suggested that the picture is not so bleak as it may seem. There is reason to think that some of the writing done in business is interesting and complex and that our understanding of it may help us see what we need to do in order to improve our own teaching of writing.

To illustrate this point, I will look closely at several pieces of writing done at the insurance company mentioned earlier. I obtained them by asking workers at the insurance company to save a copy of everything they wrote for a two week period. The first piece of writing consists of two notes—one printed, one in longhand—written on a statement of account submitted by an insurance agent. Apparently, the agent who submitted the statement made two mistakes: He forgot to fill in the date of the statement and he entered a total in the wrong place. The handwritten and printed messages are telling the agent of the error of his ways.

> Printed note:
>
> Fred, I only allow guys to miss [i.e., fail to include] two dates.
>
> N.
>
> Handwritten note:
>
> Fred, if you put the agent total on the bottom of the page [i.e., in the place indicated on the statement form], I'll have more room to holler and yell.
>
> Nancy[1]

In these notes to the agent, the writer had made a number of choices. The writer chose *not* to ignore the agent's mistakes and chose to address the agent personally rather than write a general memo to all agents concerning the importance of filling out statements correctly. Further, the writer chose to scrawl a note on the account sheet rather than write a separate memo or letter. The writer chose not to issue a direct command or instruction. In place of writing "Please put . . ." or "You must put . . .," the writer said, "If you put the agent total on the bottom of the page, I'll have more room to holler and yell." Finally, the writer chose to express the request in rather informal language.

This brief mention of some of the writer's choices provides a certain amount of information about the writer's relation to her intended audience. The choices suggest that the writer has enough authority to insist on a particular way of doing things yet does not want to sound too bossy, too authoritarian. The writer seeks, rather, to maintain a casual, good-natured relation with the reader while making sure that, in the future, the reader follows a specific set of procedures.

The choices in this first piece of writing—and the implications of those choices—may seem clearer when we contrast them with choices found in other pieces of writing done at the insurance company. Consider the following memo to a Mr. Wilson.

> Hi, Mr. Wilson, just fill in the authorization and send in the complete card in the enclosed envelope.
>
> The premium is due December 10th, you may want to send one check in the new account dated Dec. 10 since we are sometimes a little time preparing drafts when there is a change.
>
> Thank you for writing.

As in the note to "Fred," the writer is trying to influence the reader's actions; the writer wants the reader to fill out some sort of authorization and send in a check. Yet in this instance, the writer is a little more polite, the speaker-audience relation is a little more formal. Also, this reader is addressed as *Mr.*, and the writer avoids colloquial terms such as *holler* and *guys* (although the writer does choose a surprisingly casual form of greeting). By contrast with the previous letter, the writer of this letter has no power to insist that "Mr. Wilson" follow a particular course of action. The writer says, "you may want to send [a check] rather than "Please send a check," and the other request is made in a rather offhand manner; in the phrase "just fill in the [form]," the word *just* implies that the decision is not difficult or time-consuming. Further, this writer assumes that, compared to the reader of the first letter, the reader has little knowledge about the insurance business. Consequently, the writer includes some background information about the time involved in preparing drafts and avoids words that have a very specialized meaning.

The third piece of writing, obviously a form letter, was typed on bond stationery which bore the insurance company's letterhead.

> Your bank has returned your premium payment described above for Non-Sufficient funds the second time and it cannot be redeposited.
>
> Your insurance coverage is now no longer in effect and cannot provide protection to your beneficiaries nor build benefits for yourself as originally intended. If you wish to reinstate this coverage we must have a cashier's check or money order in the amount of the payment which

has been returned from your bank.

If the payment is more costly than you feel you wish to have deducted from your account each month, you may contact us or your representative and it could be changed to a more convenient amount in most cases.

If you have any questions we would appreciate hearing from you. An envelope is provided for your convenience in corresponding or for returning your cashier's check or money order.

Yours very truly,

As do the first two pieces of writing, this letter attempts to influence the reader's actions. Evidently, the insurance company would prefer to have the customer's policy remain in force and to continue to receive the customer's premium payments. Yet the speaker-audience relationship in this letter is comparatively formal, without being cold or critical. When this letter is sent out, we may be sure that all the conventions of good business letter writing will be observed. For example, the reader will be addressed "Dear Mr." (or "Dear Ms.") rather than "Hi, Mr. _____," and there will be a colon after the reader's name, not a comma as was the case in the memo to Mr. Wilson.

In addition to these choices pertaining to the form of the letter, I particularly want to note some of the choices regarding sentence structure and content. The first sentence seems a bit awkward; it would read more smoothly if it were rearranged thus: "Your bank has, for the second time, returned your premium payment because of non-sufficient funds. Your check cannot be redeposited." Yet despite this awkwardness, the writer has used syntax effectively in several places. Notice the grammatical subjects of the first, second, and third sentences of the letter. The writer begins by saying *"Your bank* has returned your premium payment..." and goes on to say *"Your insurance coverage* is now no longer in effect..." In each case, the writer avoids focusing on the customer and his/her misdeeds. That is, the writer does not say *"you* have given us a bad check" or "*you* have caused your insurance coverage to lapse." Consequently, the writer avoids the appearance of attacking or criticizing the customer. Further, the request for payment focuses on the insurance agency ("We must have a cashier's check...") and thus avoids issuing a command ("*You* must send us a cashier's check.") In addition to these choices of sentence structure, the writer chooses to provide the reader with both an alternative to allowing the insurance coverage to lapse and a convenient way to respond to the letter.

These particular pieces of writing were chosen partly because all of them were written by the same person—a bookkeeper in an insurance company. The point is this: Many people in business have to do much more writing than one might expect. And the writing may require them to do much more than observe the conventions of, say, addressing a business letter. They have to make reasonable choices about:

1. The form their writing may take (Will a neatly-typed letter be too time-consuming and formal? Will a scribbled message seem too casual or will it strike just the right note of informality?);
2. the language they will use (How much technical language is the reader likely to understand? Would it be a good idea to be a bit chatty and friendly?);
3. the structure of their sentences;
4. the amount and kind of information they must include.

Some of these choices are made without much deliberation; for an experienced writer, some choices may be almost instinctive. Yet many of these choices reflect considerable astuteness. As an illustration of this last point, consider two letters written by the president of the insurance company where the bookkeeper works.

The first letter is addressed to a man who had contracted to move the insurance executive's house. For some months, the house mover had procrastinated—the weather was too bad, he had too many prior commitments, and so on. At one point he had brought some of his equipment to the work site but then had removed it without explanation. Shortly after the equipment had been removed, the executive wrote the following letter. I have highlighted some of the choices reflected in this letter by including alternatives that the executive might have considered using.

Mr. Art Johnson
Oufda,
South Dakota

Dear [Art: / Mr. Johnson:]

[I note that / It has come to my attention that]

you have removed your equipment from the house. This concerns me since it would

indicate you're on another job.

- You must move the house
- I expect the house to be moved
- It is my expectation that the house will be moved

at the earliest date. I just will not go along with any delay not directly attributable to the weather.

- If you do not begin work within the next week, you may expect my attorney to bring suit to recover the $4,000 I have paid you.
- end letter with paragraph 2; do not make threat explicit.

To provide a context for the letter, here are some of the executive's comments about the house mover.

> Well, when you talk to him, he's an outgoing type of fellow, but he has the reputation of promising and not delivering. But the problem was that the reliable mover in town wanted $12,000 to move the house and Art would move it for $8,000. And so I knew I'd have to put up with something, but how much I didn't know. I suppose, looking backward, I'd still have him move it. There's been delay, but for $4,000 . . . .
>
> I've accepted the delay. Actually, I like the guy, and we'll be friends when it's all over. And ultimately the house will be moved. He's not going to hold it against me for being tough. And I won't hold it against him when we finally get it moved.

With this context in mind, consider the executive's choices and some of the reasoning behind them.

1. The executive chose "Dear Art" because "There are some people you call *Mister* and some you call by their first name. I can tell very quickly what the relationship is."
2. The executive chose "I note that," reasoning that "The alternative is not accurate; it implies someone else told me. I want him to know that I personally saw what the situation was."
3. The writer chose "I expect the house to be moved." The first was "too abrupt, too preemptory," and the third was "too soft." The second, he felt, made it clear to the housemover that "I am not accepting anything else."
4. The writer chose *not* to spell out the implications because "He's an intelligent person—cunning, shrewd . . . why use a hammer when you can use a gloved fist . . . . I expect he knows what I mean."

For purposes of contrast, here is another letter by the same writer. In this letter, he is telling an out-of-town agent that he is fired. The executive had tried to meet with the agent, but bad weather had made the meeting impossible. Before reading the letter, consider this background information.

> Barry Jones is a man that we hired to direct our insurance program in Montana. We were getting very good results in Montana, and we were giving the credit to Barry; we thought he was doing a good job.
>
> In the interim, however, it became apparent that Barry was not the one who was responsible for getting this job done—It was Joe Williams. We discovered that Barry Jones was up at Sommers (Montana) and that he didn't go out on the road at all . . . We concluded that he was not a manager at all and as a matter of fact—even worse than that—he wasn't a person we could communicate with. We would call him and he wouldn't return our telephone calls. He seemed to only answer our calls when it was convenient for him.

With this in mind, again consider the writer's alternatives and reasons for choosing a given alternative.

Mr. Barry Jones
Sommers, Montana

Dear
- Barry:
- Mr. Jones:

- As you know, the weather would not permit me to be in Billings. Sorry I couldn't make it.
- Delete this opening statement.

-
- It is now apparent
- I now see

That it is for the best interest of you and the company that our relationship be terminated. You need to become involved in something which will yield sufficient income, and the company needs an agency manager who will give full time to the job.

Accordingly,
- you are hereby terminated
- I am hereby terminating you

as Sales Coordinator, effective immediately.

> You will, of course receive whatever compensation is due you on business already produced. In addition, if your agent still had some calls, you may continue to receive any override due you until February 1, 1978.
>
> Delete this paragraph, end letter with "...effective immediately."

As before, here are the insurance executive's choices and the reasons he gave for making these choices.

1. The writer chose "Dear Barry" since "I still know him that well."
2. The writer chose to include the introductory paragraph about the weather preventing his meeting with the agent. "I have a habit of wanting to lead to what I want to talk about," he noted. This "lead-in" seemed especially important in this letter since the executive said he prefers to convey bad news in a face-to-face conversation. The lead-in serves, in part, to justify the writer's departure from his normal practice.
3. The executive chose "It is now apparent" because the phrase "implies that I am taking everything in account."
4. The writer chose "You are hereby terminated," stating that he prefers not to use I when "speaking for the company."
5. The executive chose to spell out the implications of this letter; he wanted the agent to have "no chance to misinterpret what I mean since I represent the company."

One point these two letters illustrate is that the writing this executive does is not governed by straightforward rules that say always do this or never do that. At some points, he deliberately uses the pronoun *I*, at other points he deliberately avoids it. In the first letter, he does not mention the implications of his statements. Yet in the second letter, he carefully spells them out. In different contexts, he makes different choices. Even more important, in different contexts he uses different reasons to justify his choices. In commenting on the first letter, the insurance executive frequently explained his choices by referring either to his intended audience or to the effect he wished to have on that audience. In the second letter, the executive made fewer references to his audience and, instead, referred to his position as spokesman for the company.

One cannot generalize about all writing done in business on the basis of these few examples. But the texts and writers' comments about them provide enough information to make reasonable if still tentative observations. The common theme in these observations is that any piece of business writing exists in one or more of contexts that are very important to the writer. As I interviewed writers about the pieces I have discussed thus far, it became clear that these writers are almost never given an unfamiliar topic and told to produce an impromptu piece of writing on that topic. Before they write, they may have interviewed someone, chatted with a client or coworker, jotted down some notes, or looked up some information in a file. At the very least, they may have reviewed what they already know about the policy of their organization. In other words, one context for a given piece of writing is the activity (e.g., talk with co-workers; reference to institutional policy; tentative notes to oneself) that precedes the attempt to write a draft.

Another context is writers' understanding of the response their writing is likely to receive. Many of the people I have talked to do not consider themselves highly expert writers. But so long as they see some purpose to their writing, so long as they feel someone else will be informed or persuaded or helped by what they say, they write with a certain amount of good will and care. When they sense that no one will ever pay any attention to the substance of what they say, they approach their work with cynicism and indifference. The only skill or ingenuity they show is in devising reasons to avoid writing.

One other important context is the writer's sense of the specific audience and purpose for each piece of writing. As I have already pointed out, business writers make several different kinds of choices (of language, syntax, content, organization) each time they write. Moreover these choices are rarely governed by simple rules that say always do this or never do that. Instead, writers base these choices on their understanding of the audience, their relation to the audience, and/or their purpose in writing.

Curiously enough, even the three pieces of writing with which this article began supports the point I am making here. The first piece contained this sentence: "When we have a lapse, cancellation or NSF less than 6 months in force we reverse those contracts off advance." The interesting thing about this passage is that it was written by the same person who composed the note to "Fred," the memo to "Mr. Wilson," and the form letter that

begins: "Your bank had returned your premium payment..." In other words, the style in this passage was just one style in the writer's repertoire. Moreover, it made sense because she was writing to an audience that understood her specialized terminology. The letter confirming a loan to a bank ("This letter will serve as our commitment...") was, indeed, a form letter. But it is rare, in my experience, to find someone (other than a clerk or secretary) who writes only form letters. Finally, even the announcement about "planned price adjustments" reflects some interesting and, I think, appropriate choices. Here again is the announcement:

> The prices listed herein conform with the provisions of the Executive Order stabilizing prices, wages, and rents announced on August 15, 1971, and subsequent implementing orders and directives. Planned price adjustments for 1971 have been temporarily suspended.

I do not admire this impersonal style of writing, but I appreciate some of the choices the writer has made when I consider an alternative way the passage might have been written:

> We'd planned to raise our prices for next year, but we can't. At least not right now. The feds won't let us. So the prices of things listed in this brochure go along with the executive order issued a while back that puts a lid on prices and so forth. Maybe you should try to take advantage of the situation and place your orders now for materials you'll need for next year.

Before commenting on these passages, I would like to introduce two more passages. The first is an announcement that a college professor distributed to students who were going on a field trip to an art museum in Chicago.

> Trippers will meet at 7:15 (Kalamazoo time) in front of the Union. The bus will leave promptly at 7:30 a.m. There will be no watering stops between Kalamazoo and Chicago, so I strongly suggest that you all eat something vaguely resembling breakfast before we start—something substantial and comforting like a Hershey bar .... After lunch everyone is on his own in the museum. Museum fatigue is a very real phenomenon and I caution you to use some restraint in your viewing, taking the twentieth century first and whatever else you can manage after that. (cited in Macrorie, 1970, p. 23)

The second passage is my revision of this announcement, which I tried to write in the style of the announcement about "planned price adjustments."

> Participation in the proposed tour of the Chicago Museum of Art is contingent upon participants' arriving at the Western Michigan State University Union prior to the authorized departure time of 7:15 a.m. (Eastern Standard Time). Participants should be advised that there will be no stops between the point of departure and the scheduled arrival in Chicago. It is recommended, therefore, that participants make adequate preparation for the journey.

I assume we can agree that neither of my revisions is an adequate substitute for the original. The college professor wanted to convey some information and also give some advice—no mean trick when dealing with college students. Consequently, the teacher needed to be as engaging and personable as possible. The impersonal bureaucratic voice we hear in my revision would be inappropriate for the intended audience and purpose. By contrast, the writer of the notice on the price bulletin was merely trying to convey information without giving advice or creating any personal bond with his or her audience. Thus the writer was probably wise to avoid the chatty voice and intimate audience relation implied in my revision. Given their different audiences and purposes, I think each passage is a creditable, if not superb, piece of writing. Each writer has made choices of diction, syntax and content that seem appropriate for the intended audience and purpose.

The preceding observations have several implications for the teaching of writing. Clearly, one implication is that students need preparation for writing. This may take the form of class discussion, role playing, or reading; or it may be a more focused activity. Before they can write about a topic, students need help in exploring that topic in order to decide what they wish to say.

A second implication is that we should not simply assign topics; rather, we should identify or help students identify the audiences and purposes for which they write. Further, we should ask students to write for a wide variety of audiences and purposes. There may be periods of time—a semester or at most a year—when we want to emphasize one particular kind of writing; but our writing programs should include the diversity of writing tasks that writers actually have to do. In creating writing programs that have this diversity, we have several useful sources to draw on. The first is the well-known

Student-Centered Language Arts Curriculum K-13 by James Moffett (1968). Less widely known but very useful are Moffett's set of curriculum materials titled *Interaction* (1973) and John Field and Robert Weiss' text, *Cases for Composition* (1978). All three of these show how to get students to write in a variety of forms for diverse audiences and purposes. Classroom materials concerning audience and purpose appear in texts by Koch and Brazil (1978) and by Stanford and Smith (1977).

A final implication is this: Once we have helped students begin to think about a topic, and once we have helped them understand the audience and purpose for which a particular piece of writing is intended, we must be sure that their writing receives an appropriate response. That is, we cannot treat students' writing as a test of their ability to avoid certain kinds of "errors." For a variety of practical ways one might respond (or train students to respond) to a student's writing, I recommend articles by Charles Cooper (1975) and Mary Beaven (1977).

Since we have a number of specific classroom procedures that will let us act upon the suggestions made, we can, if we choose, relate our teaching of writing to the writing that goes on outside our classrooms. The question now is: Should we do this? What justification can we give to ourselves, our students, and our communities? One pragmatic argument, of course, is that we are preparing students to succeed in their chosen lines of work. There is some merit to that argument. I know of large corporations and government agencies where people are not promoted unless they write with some skill. But the obvious limitation of the pragmatic argument is that not all of our students will spend their adult lives trying to climb a corporate or bureaucratic ladder to success. Some students will take jobs that require little or no writing. Other students will go to college where they will be required to do fairly specialized writing that may be, in some ways, quite different from that which I have discussed in this article.

A more compelling argument begins with the assumption that we should base our teaching on what we assume to be true of literate, mature human beings. This presupposes the knowledge that a writer's audience may differ from him or her in any number of ways and that different audiences may make diverse demands on a writer. To respond to these demands, a writer must know the alternatives that are possible and must be able to make reasonable choices among these alternatives.

As teachers of writing, we are in a good position to help students understand these alternatives. By teaching them to do what writers have to do when they write, we can contribute to students' intellectual and personal growth. This may be ambitious, but it is consistent with some of our basic values as English teachers. It suggests why I think that our understanding of the writing people have to do as a regular part of their daily work can inform what we need to do as teachers of writing.

NOTES

1 This name, of course, is a pseudonym, as are all other names used in the business writing materials in this article.

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Concurrent Sessions—Elementary

Early Development into Writing: Observing and Responding to Children's Language Behavior— Barbara S. Pettegrew and Christine C. Pappas

Examining what young children say and do as they are involved in writing tasks can be a fruitful strategy for teachers. Careful observation yields valuable information about what children already know about writing as well as suggests what they have yet to learn. By looking closely at children's behavior, teachers can discover the features of language children are paying attention to and the concepts about writing children appear to be developing. The purpose of this article is to demonstrate one way in which close observation of children who are at early stages of learning to write can be carried out in the classroom and to illustrate the wealth of information to be gained from such observation. We want to show how this information can help teachers determine, and respond to, children's individual instructional needs in writing.

An excellent opportunity for observation in the primary classroom is offered when children are invited to dictate original stories to the teacher. This kind of writing task is a joint effort, with the child composing and the adult scribing. Dictation gives the child responsibility for creating a solo discourse in the same way writing on one's own does, but leaves mechanical aspects of writing and concerns about spelling and punctuation the responsibility of the teacher. While dictated writing is often used in the early grades, the focus of the activity for teachers as well as students is typically on the end result— the written *product*. We want to suggest that teachers extend their observation to include aspects of the writing *process* revealed through what children say and do as they see their productions take shape in the written medium.

As part of our research work into writing development conducted in classrooms of kindergarten through grade 2 children, we have been tape recording sessions in which children dictated stories of their own to us which were to be subsequently shared with others. Transcripts of these tape recorded sessions captured not only the narrative portions of the children's language (enabling us to check on our accuracy as scribes), but also captured comments made by the young composers during the dictation procedure. Along with the supporting contextual information we had access to as participants in these language events, these transcripts revealed often overlooked evidence about what individual children understood and were learning about writing and about graphic language.

In this paper we will present three such transcripts, all involving children of approximately the same age who were in the early weeks of first grade. On the examples that follow, the columns on the left contain verbalizations by the child and the scribe that were recorded on tape. The typed lines are numbered for ease of reference. The child's narrative text (what the scribe actually wrote for the child) is represented in lower case type but with conventional capitalization and punctuation added; underlined portions of the transcript mark comments or questions addressed to the scribe by the child; and upper case type represents words spoken by the scribe (indexed by the letters "IN"). The column to the right in each example contains relevant contextual information and comments to aid in interpreting the child's language and behavior.

The first example records Sam, who in mid-October dictated the following story for a classroom anthology of children's original narratives. It should be noted that the dictated writing represented by this and the other examples had an authentic communicative purpose: to convey a message—in this instance an original story—to an identified audience of peers and teachers who were interested in and valued stories.

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Sam's Dictation	**Commentary**
	Sam does not offer a title but launches directly into the story.
1 The witch went to feed the hogs.	Note that Sam used definite reference to introduce his main character (i.e., *the* witch), acting as if the scribe knows what witch he is referring to.
2 Then the witch went to feed the 3 chickens, then the horses.	
4 *did I say pigs? did I say pigs?*	Sam looks questioningly at the scribe (*not* at the text).
IN YOU SAID HOGS.	
6 *oh then pigs,* She went to feed the 7 pigs. Then she went to feed the 8 rest of the animals. Then the 9 witch went out for Halloween 10 when she got done. Then she put 11 poison in the candy	Sam continues at a fairly rapid conversation pace. The scribe cannot keep up with him and begins to leave large blank spaces in the text, to be filled in later.
12 Then they eat it.	They? Who eat it? Sam hasn't clearly identified this *they*.
13 *gosh it's that long? is that long?*	Sam notices that the scribe has reached the middle of the page and comments on the length of his text.
14 And then she put more poison in it 15 to make people die. Then other 16 people went out for Halloween. They 17 didn't come to no more witch house 18 cause they turned off the lights. 19 So they ate the candy from the other 20 people. Then the witch went to bed. 21 Then there were more spiders. Then 22 she moved again.	The scribe cannot keep up with Sam's pace and continues to leave large gaps in the text; Sam does not appear concerned by this.
23 *I'll get some more paper, that's* 24 *a lot are we out of paper?*	The scribe has come to the bottom of the page and Sam responds.
IN OH, I HAVE LOTS OF PAPER.	The scribe positions a second sheet of paper for writing and Sam continues his narrative.
26 Then she moved into a new house, 27 but there was no spiders on the 28 bed all night. So the witch 29 stayed there at her house for the 30 whole month till they got spiders 31 on them. Then she moved.	
32 *why is your hand writing?*	Sam looks thoughtful and questions the scribe.
IN WHAT?	
34 *am I writing the things I'm* 35 *writing?*	Does he mean: "...the things I'm *saying*?"
36 *you like writing don't you*	Scribe nods. Then Sam continues with his story.

Sam's Dictation	Commentary
37 Then the witch went to another house.	
38 *do you think it's enough?*	Half of the second page is filled when he questions the scribe.
IN WHAT DO YOU THINK?	
40 *I don't know.*	
41 IT'S YOUR STORY.	
42 *I think it's a lot.*	
43 So she liked that house. Then	Sam completes his story.
44 she never moved back out,	
45 never again.	
46 *ah that's enough, I don't know*	
47 *any more...*	
IN DO YOU HAVE A TITLE OR A NAME FOR THIS STORY?	Sam says that he has no 'title' but he offers a 'name' for his story.
50 *nope I don't have no title.*	
51 the haunted house.	
IN THE HAUNTED HOUSE.	The scribe repeats the title as she writes it at the top of the first page.
53 *even on the other one?*	
IN HUH?	
55 *even the other... on...*	
56 the haunted haunted house!	Sam reiterates the title with an additional 'haunted'; somewhat confused, the scribe requests clarification (one or two 'haunted'?)
IN I DON'T UNDERSTAND. IS 'THE HAUNTED HOUSE' THE NAME FOR YOUR STORY?	
60 *both of them!*	
IN WHAT DO YOU MEAN?	
62 *the other one is too*	Sam finally indicates by pointing that he wants the title/name on the second page of his story as well as on the first.

Sam's performance during this dictation experience reveals that he was at a very early point in the transition to literacy. Indeed, he could not independently read any of the text he had dictated. His behavior suggests that he was unaware of the relationship between what he was saying and what was being written. Significant portions of his oral text were not being scribed as a result of his too-rapid conversational pace, but the resultant gaps in the written text went unnoticed by him. In addition, his use of definite reference (*the* witch") and a pronoun whose referent was not clear ("*they*" in line 12) presumes knowledge that his audience does not share.

The feature of graphic language that was salient to Sam was overall length (see his comments in lines 23-24 and also in line 42); and when the activity was finished Sam was quite pleased to have *two* pages of story to share with his class. He was obviously paying little attention to the details of print and, unlike many children of this age, did not closely monitor what the scribe was doing. But notice his comments in lines 32 and 34-35. Sam is on the verge of a critical discovery about writing: one's message can be communicated by writing as well as by talking. This concept about the *message potential* of graphic language is necessary in learning to write.

What kind of writing instruction does Sam appear ready for, based on these observations? For a start, Sam could profit from regular exposure to seeing his oral language rendered graphically in order to help him develop the idea that his messages can be expressed in the written medium. The teacher could provide an expanded range of dictation opportunities for Sam involving a variety of messages and purposes. He could continue to create

stories, but he could also dictate labels, picture captions, descriptions of activities and events, etc., to be shared with others. The emphasis for Sam at this point in his literacy development should be on wholistic messages which serve a purpose and on Sam's communicative potential with such functional units of language in the graphic medium.

The teacher/scribe serves as the first audience for such dictated productions, and it can be expected that in this context instructional opportunities will present themselves for extending Sam's learning to additional aspects of written language. As an example of instructional follow-up using the above dictated story, the teacher could read the story back to Sam (inviting him to follow along in the reconstruction of his message). As they read the story together, the teacher can give Sam feedback about the communicative adequacy of his message. She can let Sam know she is puzzled about the identity of *the* witch in his story and of *they* (in line 12). Sam's clarification can then be incorporated into his text. In this way Sam can be introduced to *revision* as a part of the writing process. It is during this phase of writing that an author further shapes and refines his/her message to better meet the needs of the audience. Such feedback can help Sam learn how to present the information he has and wants to communicate.

The next transcript records another first grade child engaged in dictation. Andy has a bit of difficulty in launching his narrative, and he seems to require concomitant drawing activity to help him sustain the narrative once it is begun. But notice that he understands the scribe's role in this dictation event (in line 8 Andy's directive: "write 'animals in the woods'" makes this clear). Notice also what it is that this child pays attention to as the scribe writes his story.

	Andy's Dictation	**Commentary**
1	*I'm thinking trying to think*	
2	*I'm thinking hard hard hard...*	
IN	IT CAN BE ABOUT ANYTHING YOU WANT.	
5	*I like one named animals in*	
6	*the woods.*	
IN	OK, LET'S HAVE A STORY ABOUT THAT.	
8	*write* animals in the woods	Unsure if Andy intends these words as a title or to begin the text of the story, the scribe asks for clarification.
IN	OK, ANIMALS IN THE WOODS. IS THAT THE TITLE?	
11	*what is the title? the name?*	
IN	YES.	
13	*yeah*	
IN	WHAT ABOUT ANIMALS IN THE WOODS?	
15	Monkeys eat bananas. *I might*	The scribe writes 'monkeys eat bananas' and waits for the next part of the narrative, but Andy is not yet ready to continue.
16	*make a little picture on this,*	
17	*I need a piece of paper hey,*	
18	*I don't have anything to draw*	
19	*with any crayons or anything*	
IN	HOW ABOUT...	Andy reaches for a felt tipped pen lying on the table while the scribe repeats his last narrative words to encourage him to continue.
21	*a pencil? a pen!*	
IN	OK MONKEYS EAT BANANAS.	
23	Monkeys... (long silence)	The scribe explicitly verbalizes permission for Andy to draw while dictating.
IN	YOU TELL ME YOUR STORY AS YOU DRAW THE PICTURE. HOW'S THAT?	
27	*ok branches*	As he draws a tree, Andy says the word 'branches.'

Andy's Dictation	Commentary
IN BRANCHES OK. SHOULD I WRITE SOMETHING DOWN?	The scribe is not sure if Andy wants 'branches' as part of his narrative and requests clarification.
30 *yeah* IN WHAT SHOULD I WRITE?	Andy begins to draw a monkey.
32 Monkeys hang on their tails too. 33 *I know how to spell 'too' but* 34 *you can do it* 35 *k don't you hear that k sound* 36 *on the end? oh yeah...* 37 *no! it's t-o I think it is*	Andy watches closely as the scribe writes. He points to the word 'monkey' but notices that the 'k' does not appear at the end of the word. Andy "corrects" the scribe's spelling of 'too' but then hedges.
IN WHAT SHOULD COME NEXT? 39 Elephants look for food.	Andy continues to draw, adding another monkey.
40 *gotta put hair...*	
41 *here's another one eating* 42 *bananas*	
IN SHOULD I PUT THAT IN? 44 Monkeys walk on their legs in 45 the tree	Andy offers an alternative utterance and watches the scribe write it.
IN WHAT'S NEXT? 47 eating a banana... *and the* 48 *finish is eating a banana ba-* 49 *nana's a long word*	Andy comments as the scribe writes 'banana.'
IN IT SURE IS. 51 *it's that long that long that* 52 *long that long...*	He points to each letter of the word 'banana.'
IN IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE? 54 *of course there is.* It is 55 wintertime. Snow, snow, snow, 56 snow is coming down, big 57 balls of snow. 58 *he doesn't want to fall in the* 59 *snow cause it's freezing.* IN SHOULD I WRITE THAT DOWN?	Not clear if this utterance is an aside or intended to be part of the written text, the scribe asks for clarification.
61 Monkey does not want to fall in 62 the snow because it's freezing.	Andy responds with a more formal version of his utterance for inclusion in the written text.

Andy's Dictation	Commentary
63 And here comes a man freezing 64 *'freezing' after 'man'* in the 65 snow. Man has a cage from the 66 zoo. *I know how to spell 'zoo'* 67 *I know how to spell 'zoo' because* 68 *it's easy to spell z-o-o*	Monitoring the scribe's progress, Andy offers some assistance in placement of the word 'freezing.' He watches closely as the scribe writes this last sentence and offers some spelling information.
IN RIGHT! 70 *but if you put an 'm' on the* 71 *end you would spell 'zoom'*	As the word 'zoo' is finished, he makes this observation.
IN THAT'S RIGHT! YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY RIGHT! 74 And he is trying to catch animals 75 for the zoo. He found the monkeys. 76 He put them in the cage and took 77 them to the zoo. He fed them mon- 78 key food. *I don't even know what* 79 *monkey food is.* They climbed on the 80 bars and wanted to get out. 81 *do you think I need the picture* 82 *with it?*	
(brief conversational exchange)	
83 *zoo? it doesn't look like a 'z'*	Andy makes this comment after noticing how the scribe has written the word 'zoo' in line 77 above.
IN OH, THAT'S MY SLOPPY 'Z.' 85 *well make it a better 'z'*	He closes with a directive, sounding very like a teacher!

Andy's behavior was different from Sam's in several respects. Andy was clearly monitoring the scribe's activity and attending to specific aspects of the written version of his text as it came into existence. In contrast to Sam, Andy demonstrates better understanding of the function of writing and of the relationship between oral and graphic language. Andy was concerned with specific words and spelling patterns; thus it appears that the graphic language notions of 'word' and 'letter' are functional concepts for him. In addition, his response to the scribe's "sloppy 'z'" recorded in line 83 ("it doesn't *look* like a 'z'") shows an appreciation for the necessity for shared conventions in order for graphic language to serve communication.

Andy's responses at two points in the dictation (lines 41-47 and 58-62) reveal further evidence of his considerable progress in the transition to literacy. He seemed to recognize that writing is not simply talk written down, for he modified several comments which accompanied his drawing activity for inclusion in the written story. His oral comment (lines 41-42) "here's another *one* eating bananas" became "*monkeys* walk ... eating a banana" for the written text. The utterance in lines 58-59: "*he doesn't* want to fall in the snow *'cause* it's freezing" became "*monkey does not* want to fall ... *because* it's freezing" (lines 61-62). Andy's shift from talking about a picture to writing a story for a non-present audience was marked by choices in wording which resulted in a more verbally explicit message with a more "formal" tone. He shows he can "talk like a book" when his language has to function as "book language" (i.e., language to be read by an audience removed in space and time from the original language production context). The options Andy selected in these instances suggest he has tacit understanding of an important difference between language which accompanies action in face-to-face

encounters (typical oral language) and language which must communicate to a more distant audience (typical written language).

Continued dictation opportunities could be beneficial to Andy from an instructional standpoint. The example reveals he was generating abundant hypotheses about specific features of language which are salient to him (e.g., line 37 "no! it's t-o . . . I think it is"; lines 66-68: "I know how to spell 'zoo' . . . because it's easy to spell z-o-o"). The dictation context provides a scribe who can give him immediate feedback relative to those hypotheses.

In addition, Andy's keen interest in the graphic aspects of writing coupled with his understanding about unique characteristics of written language can be capitalized on by providing many opportunities for him to write on his own. He can try out his hypotheses in these expanded writing contexts. The teacher should encourage his experimentation with pencil and paper, realizing that "mistakes" will occur but secure in the knowledge that such experimentation supported by non-punitive feedback leads to learning.

Tera is the third child whose dictation behavior we want to look at. There is an additional notation on Tera's typescript: dashed underlining. This notation marks Tera's slow, deliberate reiteration of words already dictated to the scribe. The effect of this reiteration was to make the scribe's task much easier. As you read through the example, notice how Tera sustains this well-formed narrative through the skillful use of pronouns whose meanings are clear to the reader. She has excellent control over the information she wants to share.

Tera's Dictation	**Commentary**
IN I'LL GIVE YOU A MINUTE TO THINK, TERA.	
3 *ok* Once upon a time there 4 lived three butterflies. And 5 they liked to fly everywhere. 6 And one day they flew to the 7 pool.	After about a minute of thoughtful silence, Tera launches her story, dictating the equivalent of one sentence at a time, pausing between each sentence just long enough for the scribe to get it all down. She closely monitors the scribe's progress.
8 [and they were] And they landed 9 *I wanted 'landed'*	The bracketed words are a false start; Tera points to the word 'were' which the scribe has written, indicating a correction is in order.
IN OK. 11 they landed in the pool	The scribe erases 'were' and begins to write 'landed'; Tera slowly repeats 'they landed' as the scribe writes these words.
12 And when they got out they were 13 very wet. The littlest one was 14 soaking wet.	Correction completed, Tera picks up her narrative, again giving one sentence at a time and pausing until it is written before offering the next.
15 They wished they were they 16 wished they were dry. 17 Then they flew away with rain- 18 drops all over. with 19 raindrops all over 20 It seemed like it was raining. 21 Then they they landed in 22 their tree. They were glad. 23 The next day they were dry, 24 and they wanted to go back but 25 the mother butterfly did not 26 want to get wet again. 27 The end.	Periodically during the remainder of her uninterrupted narrative, Tera slowly repeats selected words and phrases; she effectively reiterates these words just as the scribe is about to write them.

It is clear that Tera was carefully reading the text as it was being written down. When the scribe failed to change Tera's false start (in line 8) and wrote "...and they *were*..." instead of "...and they *landed*," Tera was quick to note the discrepancy, and she proceeded with the story only after a correction was made. Tera seems the most advanced of the three children in terms of literacy development, a judgment her fluent re-reading of the story confirmed.

Tera was very aware of the time and memory constraints which the task imposed on the scribe, as evidenced by her appropriate dictation pace and her considerate reiteration of selected words just as the scribe was *about* to write them. She was effectively tracking the scribe's progress and anticipating points at which she could help. In short, Tera was behaving very much like a writer!

Because of the resources she can bring to bear, Tera needs ample opportunity to *be* a writer. Dictation as an instructional context would still be appropriate for Tera, but she needs more frequent opportunities to take over the dual responsibility of composing *and* scribing. While encouraging her to write on her own, the teacher must, however, keep in mind that Tera is still a novice. As a novice, her independently created productions may not meet the criteria typically used to evaluate the work of more experienced writers (e.g., conventional spelling and punctuation). Tera undoubtedly has much yet to learn relative to the details of graphic language, but she can best extend her competence as a writer through rich opportunities to use—and refine—what she knows. Her own attempts at writing for herself then become a major source of information for the teacher about the kinds of instructional feedback to give Tera.

Summary

Dictation offers a means for teachers to assess children's developing knowledge about writing. Included in this knowledge are the following: awareness that a message can be expressed in the written medium (Clay, 1975); concepts of "words" and "letters" (Clay, 1979); awareness of spelling patterns (Read, 1975; Zutell, 1978); and appreciation for the informational needs of one's audience, particularly in the use of reference in texts (Pettegrew & Pappas, 1980; Pappas, 1981; Pettegrew, 1981). Each of the three children whose language we looked at demonstrated different degrees of competency relative to this knowledge. They were at different points in the transition to literacy and needed different sorts of instructional assistance at the time we sampled their language. Observation carried out along the lines we suggest can help a teacher provide instruction responsive to these differences which are to be found in any classroom.

It is interesting that standardized reading test scores for Sam, Andy, and Tera correspond to the differential literacy development our observations in the dictated writing task reveal. (The test was given within days of the dictation.) The test data, however, are not very helpful in suggesting the specific kinds of instruction these children might profit from at a particular point in time. The observational data from the dictation is richer and potentially more useful for teachers who must provide instruction which builds on what children already know and on what they are trying to learn.

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*The information presented in this paper was part of a workshop presentation. The language samples come from a longitudinal study of cohesion and story structure in children's oral and written narrative discourse from kindergarten through grade two conducted at The Ohio State University, Martha L. King and Victor M. Rentel, principal investigators. This research was supported by NIE under contract numbers G-79-0039 and G-79-0137.

Using Children's Literature as a Springboard to Writing—Mary Lou White

A little boy who gets greater pleasure from tap dancing than from trying to play softball is the central character of *Oliver Button Is a Sissy*, a picture story book by De Paola. Oliver faces the problems of being called sissy, of being defended by girls, and of not winning the talent show. He also feels the joy of belonging as the story ends. Teachers can help readers understand Oliver's feelings and empathize with him. Most readers have thought everyone was against them at one time or another. Most readers have had feelings of pleasure after realizing that life isn't so bad after all. Books such as this provide teachers with sources of stimulating oral discussion and role playing that can lead to written expressions. In this sense literature becomes the springboard to help children dive into writing.

Research on the use of literary models suggests that there should be a systematic approach to using literary models and that a series of steps is necessary to move from reading the book to producing a written response. Put otherwise, the idea that reading a book will immediately spark a writing act is not a valid notion.

The process of teaching writing by using literary models is expained in a set of "Doubled Three R's," which is a simple way of describing a systematic procedure for using books to stimulate writing. The chart accompanying this article indicates the purpose of the steps and the activities the teacher must engage in to accomplish the tasks.

THE THREE R's, DOUBLED

Activity	Purpose	Teacher's Role
Reading (or listening)	Provide stimulation of mood and feeling.	Select for the needs of the children.
	Present a model for form.	Enjoy the book with the children.
		Read aloud (or recommend) with enthusiasm.
Responding	Extend the literature to the children's personal experiences.	Provide opportunities to process what is read or heard.
	Focus on a purpose for writing.	Help children share their feelings in a variety of ways: discussions, drama, role play, puppetry, comparisons.
		Offer a potpourri of directions for writing, i.e., web a multitude of ways that writing can be done.
Writing	Write a first draft without the encumbrances of mechanics.	Provide support and encouragement for ideas.
		Downplay the mechanics of writing.
Reading	Provide the audience for listening to the finished writing.	Allow children to read to others in the class.
		Serve as the model for attention and interest.
		Show that the writing is valued by giving time to hear what is written.

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Activity	Purpose	Teacher's Role
Responding	Develop ideas and mechanics.	Stimulate discussion and suggestions for revision.
		Encourage praise and enjoyment.
		Guide the development of ideas.
		Work with children on mechanics after the ideas are formed.
		Encourage acceptance of ideas from peers.
		Challenge children to make judgments about which alternatives should be taken in the writing.
		Show concern for style.
		Urge children to compare present writing with previous writing.
Writing	Revise the draft using the tools and techniques of language to refine the imaginative ideas.	Provide time for revision.
		Establish the habit of using reference tools.
		Encourage an attitude of pride in polished writing.
		Be supportive of writing efforts before they become frustrating to children.

When working through the stages of process suggested in the chart, teachers need to develop a knowledge framework for the curriculum. The elements of literary fiction provide a set of knowledge about writing styles and forms that could be useful in organizing specific lessons. Some examples of these follow for characterization, plot, setting, and literary style.

Characterization

Point of view. Cressey's *Fourteen Rats and a Rat Catcher* is an excellent introduction to point of view. The story centers on a little old lady who wants to rid her house of rats. Then the story changes from her tale to the dilemma of a group of rats who try to outwit a little old lady who is trying to get rid of them. Several shifts of point of view go back and forth from it being the lady's tale to the rats' tale. Although a picture book, this story makes a fine tool for teaching point of view at any age level. Children could take other stories and try writing them from various points of view. *Night Journeys* by Avi, for example, is a historical fiction novel for middle grades told in first person dealing with runaway indentured servants. If incidents in that story were retold by other characters in the story, new themes could emerge that would show the problem in another light.

Dialogues. Conversation is used a great deal in stories for children; according to one study, 70% of the actions in picture story books are conversations. After discussion of the use of idioms, dialect, and the immediacy of feeling possible through dialogues, encourage children to write conversations about familiar experiences. An interesting writing project is to have children recollect a small personal adventure, such as a camping incident or a sports activity. Have them role play by giving conversations of the activity to their parents, the school principal, and their best friend. After role playing, direct them to write the conversations and compare the differences in how they described the experience. This works especially well if they are telling of a prank that backfired or a joke on themselves. The manner in which it is described usually differs according to the person who is intended as the reader. This activity is a good

learning experience for understanding the author's voice as well as for developing conversational style. Several diverse picture books for leading into this activity are Chaffin's *We Be Warm Till Springtime Comes*, Clifton's *Amifika*, and Shearer's *Billy Jo Jive*.

Plot Development

Repetitive plot patterns. Encourage children to look at simple stories in picture books in order to see the development of the story. *A Treeful of Pigs* by Lobel is a good example of a plot that repeats the same pattern several times until the climax. Hutchins' *Rosie's Walk* does the same thing on an even simpler level. As children see these patterns emerge, encourage them to use the style as models and form their own stories in the patterns. Concept books such as ABC and counting books might be easier to use as beginning models. The fact that these are not really stories can be pointed out when the books are contrasted with those that have the story element.

Plot beginnings. The first line of a story is very important and sometimes difficult to write. Select several books that are favorites with children and read aloud the first lines. Study them to determine what is the intriguing element in the line. Encourage children to develop some alternate first lines for some of their previously written stories. Some especially interesting first lines are in these intermediate grade books: Bawden's *The Robbers*, Yep's *Sea Glass*, and Cleary's *Ramona and Her Father*.

Setting

Mood. Select a number of poems about the same aspect of nature. A good source for moon poems is Russo's *The Moon's the North Wind's Cooky*. Give one poem to a group of two or three children and encourage them to find the words, sounds, or phrases that set the mood for the particular poem. Share the findings of how poets have used these tools to create feelings. Then have children consider another aspect of nature, perhaps wind or rain or sunshine. Have them write a few sentences, not a poem, that use some of the methods they discovered in the study of the poems. A good deal of oral discussion and group writing on an intervening topic, such as leaves, might be necessary for some children to make the transition from analyzing to synthesizing.

Literary Style

Sentence structure. An interesting flip book is *729 Puzzle People*. The cardboard pages are cut horizontally into three parts that can be matched with all other page parts in the book by flipping pages. The book has sentences on each page part that make sense structurally when matched with another page part. Children can make their own flip books and devise compound and complex sentences, each set in the same structure pattern for their books. Although the model does not have literary value, the fascination of the flip pages will easily motivate a sentence structure in well-written books. Parallel construction, variety in order, the use of gerunds, and many other stylistic devices can be identified in books that have first been read for enjoyment. Intermediate grade books that have some fine phrasings include *The 79 Squares* by Bosse and *The Third Eye* by Hunter. Similar fine phrasings are found in these picture books: *A Firefly Named Torchy* by Waber and *When the Sky Is Like Lace* by Horwitz.

The suggestions given here have the potential for developing the writing skills of children, but they must be combined with a personal intervention on the part of the teacher. The teacher's attitude of love, respect, and encouragement sets the environment for creative thinking and writing that can never be accomplished through computer programs or workbook problems. Writing—good writing—is not easy to produce. The teacher who shows personal interest, combined with a literature-based writing skills curriculum program developed in a systematic way, will offer children the best opportunity for developing their writing skills.

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Concurrent Sessions—Secondary

Reading, Writing and Thinking in Secondary Schools— T. Stevenson Hansell

Literacy in the United States in the 1980's involves working with print not only by reading but also by writing. Writing is to reading as an actor is to an audience—the creative side of the performance. Both actor and audience must work together to achieve satisfaction. In addition, anyone who has acted a part becomes more aware of possible interpretations of words and movement. Just so, anyone who has written to communicate clearly becomes more aware of the meanings of words and the effects of word arrangement and organization in connected discourse. Thus, both writing and reading are complementary parts of the larger performance of thinking and communicating.

Writing and reading tasks are mutually supportive at all levels of development from the non-reader stage (scribble and letter formation practice which occurs as early as 3 or 4 years of age) to the commercial author stage of preparing manuscripts and/or essays. This is so because both reading and writing require an individual to use all that s/he knows about language (including knowledge of orthographic patterns, vocabulary, phrasing, grammar, and story or text organization) and all that s/he knows about the world to communicate ideas. Thus, the stages presented in the book, *How To Read A Book* (Adler and Van Doren, 1972) may be used as a means to guide student writing as well as reading.

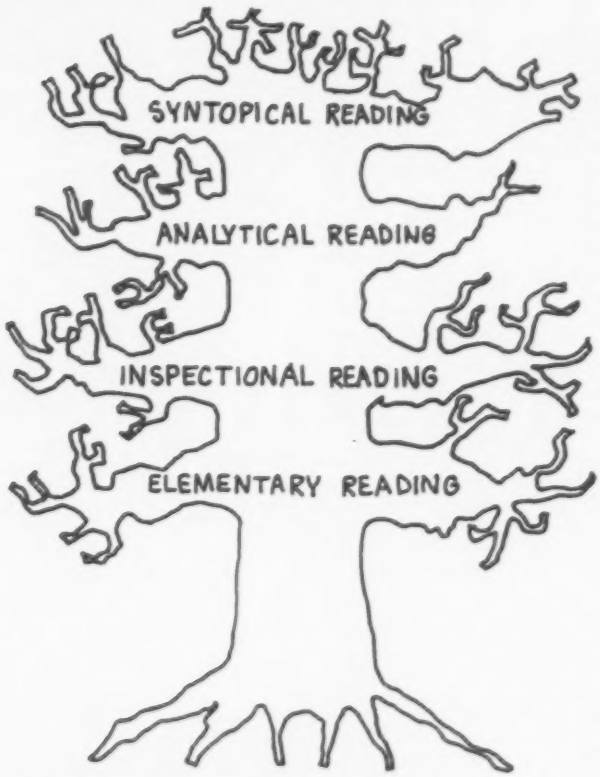

Figure 1. Branches of Reading Development

Adler and Van Doren suggest four branches of reading development as shown in Figure 1. And, although the authors wrote for an adult, mature reading audience, we can use this description to guide students at all levels of development toward the goals of literacy.

Elementary Reading

The first branch is named *Elementary Reading* but is not necessarily limited to the elementary grades. Elementary reading may be characterized as those procedures which all readers use when they run into material which is difficult to understand. We must work to understand the ideas presented in words, and to connect these ideas with others in the passage into a set of meaningful relations. More specifically, elementary reading is that level which includes the ability to:

1. identify thousands of words at sight;
2. understand sentences and their grammatical relations;
3. use context to determine the meanings of words;
4. follow written directions;
5. understand forms;
6. locate information;
7. connect ideas across passages;
8. read for different purposes; and
9. find pleasures in information through reading.

As actors, we may ask youngsters to develop these same elements through writing. The vocabulary development task is probably best approached through editing writing. Those samples selected for revision should be examined by the writer, by an editing team, or by the teacher to look for words or phrases that may be replaced. Editors replace particular words or phrases to clarify ideas or occasionally, to fit the phrasing to the audience. Sentence 1, for example, needs clarification. By contrast, Sentence 2 could be changed to Sentence

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3 to dress it up for a performance in the school newspaper.

1. They looked like they're fighting over *something*.
2. The honor system should be kept for three reasons.
3. The honor system should be retained for three reasons.

Though Sentence 3 does not have a meaning that is different from Sentence 2, the tone is clearly different. One of many decisions a teacher must make daily is when to encourage attention to the form of writing and when to insist that attention be focused on meaning.

Sentence Sense

Grammatical relations, or sentence sense, may be developed by encouraging pattern writing in a procedure Hahn (1980) calls Language Encounters. Koch (1970) used this approach when he encouraged "I Used To Be. . ." poems such as:

"I used to be a goldfish
But now I am a girl."

"I always was Mr. Coke
But now I am Mrs. Seven-Up."

Stegall (1977) used the same idea in her article taking an Ogden Nash poem and offering it for imitation. So "The Jellyfish" was transformed into "The Sister."

The Jellyfish
Who wants my Jellyfish?
I'm not sellyfish.

The Sister
Who wants my sister?
I'll not miss her.

Silverstein's *Where The Sidewalk Ends* (1974) is a middle and junior high school teacher's delight. Silverstein's verse is fun, grammatically complex, and easy to imitate. The poem, "Who," serves as one example.

Who
Who can kick a football
From here to Afghanistan?
I can.

Who fought tigers in the street
While all the policemen ran and hid?
I did.

Who will have X-ray eyes
And be known as the man no bullet can kill?
I will.

Who can sit and tell lies all night?
I might.

Autograph books, such as Morrison's *Remember Me When This You See* (1961), and amusing epitaphs such as *Here Lies The Body* (Corbett, 1974) add to the fun of imitating sentence patterns.

Linguistic research (Bormuth, 1964) suggests that conjunctions are more difficult for students to understand. Patterns, such as Margaret Wise Brown's The Important Book (1949) and Charlip's *Fortunately, Unfortunately* (1964), and Silverstein's *A Giraffe and A Half* (1964) make connectives meaningful. The patterns are clear, the task is clear, and students enjoy writing when they have an appropriate pattern to imitate.

Context

An assignment to use a multiple meaning word such as *bank* or *run* or *pull* in as many ways as possible requires each student to clarify the meaning of the word through context. A robber may *pull* a bank job while a policeman may *pull* the file on known robbers and the banker may use his *pull* to have the police work overtime. (See Heilman and Holmes, 1972, for a list of other multiple meaning words.) It takes only a few minutes to brainstorm a list of known phrases for a particular word. Then students may be assigned to write a brief paragraph using the specified word in 3 or more ways. Better still, use this procedure when students confuse one meaning of a word for another. Mathematics, science and shop teachers may all use a word such as *set* with a different meaning.

Directions

Written directions are easy to follow only when you know what you are to do in advance. The difficult steps of writing directions are, first, including steps in sequence and, second, knowning how much to leave out. An assignment to write directions for tasks that specific individuals know, such as how to throw a boomerang or how to make a pompom from crepe paper, and a chance for others to try out the directions will help each student learn the need for careful thinking and review when reading or writing directions.

One type of activity that involves both reading directions and writing is the task of completing

forms. Forms are a part of everyday life. We complete forms for shopping by mail, for applying for employment, and for many business functions. Youngsters complete forms for virtually every application from contests to driver's license. Contest forms—especially the 25 words or less variety—may serve as motivation for this ubiquitous, and often distasteful, task. But through form completion may be distasteful, we are willing to carry out the task when we have a goal that we value. So, true motivation comes from tasks directly related to individual goals.

Locating Information

While writing from a variety of references will be covered in detail in the 4th stage of reading, one procedure that deals with reference work is the parlor game called Dictionary Fictionary. The object of the game is to create a definition for a word that others will think is the dictionary definition. Words are selected from the dictionary with the criterion that no player from a group of 5 to 10 knows the meaning of that word. The rules of play are as follows:

Dictionary Fictionary

Materials needed:
a good dictionary
3x5 index cards
pencils for each player

Number of Players: 4 to 10

To Play:

1. Select a leader for the first round.
2. Leader opens the dictionary at random and searches the two open pages for a word s/he does not know. When s/he finds such a word, s/he asks if any member of the group knows the word. When a word is found that no member of the group knows, the game begins.
3. Each player takes a 3x5 card and writes (on the lined side) the selected word and a definition for that word. The leader copies the dictionary definition. All other players create their own definition.
4. All players hand their cards to the leader.
5. Leader shuffles the cards and reads each "definition" aloud.
6. Leader reads cards a second time and each player votes for the definition s/he thinks is the real one.
7. Leader records the number of votes on each card.
8. Players receive 1 point for each player who voted for their definition. Each player who voted for the correct definition receives 2 points. (As a variation, the leader receives 1 point for every incorrect guess.)

The role of leader is then passed on to another player and a second round begins. Continue until each player has a chance to be leader.

The activities mentioned above, as well as daily or weekly logs or diaries, involve students in writing for a variety of purposes including both enjoyment and the structuring of information. Writing tasks are naturally integrated into every class when students are asked to describe what they have seen or done on paper. It is just as appropriate (and perhaps more so) for a science teacher to ask students to write a description of what they have seen as it is for an English teacher. It is as just as important for a shop teacher to ask students to write directions as it is for a health or physical education teacher to give rules for a game. Writing tasks help students review any topic and organize their thoughts about that topic.

Inspectional Reading

Reviewing a topic and organizing one's thoughts about it is the essence of the second level of reading described by Adler and Van Doren which they call *Inspectional Reading*. Inspectional reading is used for one of two purposes: to sample a text to decide if it suits one's purpose or contains relevant information; or to read at high speed to identify the major ideas and their relations. Inspectional reading is a preliminary step to the two later levels of analytical and syntopical reading which will be discussed in later sections. In school, inspectional reading may be used to sample an assigned textbook before studying a particular assignment, or for quickly reading newspaper stories. *How To Read A Book* suggests that the goal of inspectional reading is to be able to summarize the book, article, or chapter in a sentence or a short paragraph. For example, a reader might summarize this article by saying that it, "Proposes a correlation between learning to read and learning to write by showing how each of four levels of reading can be used to structure writing tasks."

The writing tasks related to inspectional writing

are summaries. Practice in summarizing is an appropriate step to more mature writing and thinking. Students can practice summarizing current events, television shows, athletic events, novels, and even a chapter of a text after a five minute inspection. Imagine the amount of thinking necessary to view a chapter for five minutes and then write a summary of the main points and their relations. Such a task (very similar to surveying and questioning in the SQ3R procedure, Robinson, 1961) requires a different—more flexible—approach to reading. Imagine also, the task of summarizing the argument for an essay or letter to the editor before beginning to write. The ensuing effect is a powerfully organized argument.

Analytical Reading

As we move to the more mature levels of communication, the emphasis for both reading and writing focuses more and more on clear thinking. An actor cannot create his role without a clear conception of character—even though a single role may be presented in several ways—nor can an audience fully understand a play without a conception of plots and characters—even though a particular plot may take unexpected turns and twists. Analytical reading tasks ask students to examine non-fiction books or articles as arguments and works of fiction as perspectives on a theme. Writing tasks associated with this level of thinking require students to prepare essays, editorials, advertisements, or critiques as arguments and to create stories not as lists of events, but as characters, settings, and events arranged to reflect a theme. The remainder of this paper will be limited to reading and writing non-fiction as means of developing critical thinking.

Phases

There are four major phases of analytical reading:

1. Determining what the book is about as a whole.
2. Determining what is said in detail.
3. Evaluating the book to decide if it is true.
4. Determining the implications for the reader's life.

The first phase, what is it about as a whole, may be determined by means of inspectional reading as discussed above. For more complex works, Adler and Van Doren suggest listing the parts of the book, chapter, or article, and discussing the relations among the parts. As a final step of the first phase, the authors suggest stating the problems which the author has selected to address. Typical problems suggested by the authors include: defining what ends should be sought or what means should be used to achieve an end; exploring the causes of particular events or the functions of objects in history or science; or simply defining an abstract concept such as democracy by stating its critical features.

These phases which are set as guides for readers are in fact, models of what good authors do when they write. Each author must make limits for his topic. Each author must define the problem he chooses to address. Writing is more clear when the problem is more clearly defined.

To clearly define a problem requires thought. Frequently, students are required to produce writing with a minimum time for thought. Conversely, more frequently, students do not use the available time to define problems clearly before writing. Time spent discussing issues and defining problems orally before writing and time spent discussing an author's problems after reading will pay dividends. A clear plan is necessary to any successful project.

What Is Said in Detail

The second phase of analytical reading is the task of searching for the author's message. Adler and Van Doren suggest that in non-fiction, the message is an argument, and the author's role is to convince the reader that he is correct. When non-fiction writing is analyzed as an argument—as opposed to being accepted as truth because it is in print—it becomes apparent that a successful argument requires clearly defined terms and propositions. Terms are words which represent ideas of particular importance to an argument. Propositions are those statements of fact or assumption (usually sentences) which together lead to the author's conclusions.

Terms may be further described as words with particular meanings. Readers may recognize terms through inspectional reading. In textbooks, terms are frequently repeated as labels in graphics such as maps or diagrams.

When writing to communicate ideas, authors must structure their writing through the selection of key terms. Teachers can help each student select terms by encouraging him to brainstorm—perhaps originally with a group—important words related to a topic. Emphasis on defining terms when reading and writing helps a student participate more fully

both as audience and as actor.

Since key ideas are important in relation to other ideas, identifying key terms frequently leads to identifying an author's propositions. If you, as a reader, have identified the words *term, proposition,* and *argument* as key terms, you will recognize that all three exist in the sentence above which states, "...a successful argument requires clearly defined terms and propositions." This statement, then, may be defined as a proposition—a statement which I, as author, am asserting as a basic assumption. The term *proposition* is used by Adler and Van Doren as a term in logic. Thus, it is up to a reader to accept or reject any particular proposition. Likewise, it is the responsibility of each writer to make each proposition clear. Practice locating propositions in editorials and advertisements can help a student identify good and poor examples of propositions. Writing sentences outlines will provide practice in stating propositions devoid of elaboration.

A series of propositions and the conclusion the author reaches based on the propositions make up an argument. The outlining task, either when reading or before writing, serves as a means of clarifying an argument. One way to think of an argument is as the statement made after a Roman numeral in an outline. Arguments, like performances, can be of varying quality. To be of high quality, an argument must include all relevant information, the equivalent of stage set, and be logical. Just as an actor must remember the conversational lines as well as the monologues or punch lines, so must a writer include alternative explanations in an argument and show where they are false. Before an actor can communicate feelings to an audience, s/he must feel as the character would feel. Similarly, before a writer can convince readers of his point, he must examine his argument to see that the propositions provide information which is sufficient to prove the point and which make the conclusion necessary. Again, advertisements and editorials provide a rehearsal stage for analyzing arguments. Both are clearly intended to persuade and both frequently rely more on emotional connotations of words than on logic.

Determing Truth Value

When a student writes with logic and full knowledge of information, we will find that his argument is true. In advertisements as in "method acting" we frequently find an argument in which the author is unaware of something we know, represents something falsely, is illogical or is incomplete. Adler and Van Doren suggest that we use these criteria before accepting an argument as true. The criteria suggest that readers—and audience—do not judge a performance strictly by what they see before them, but also in light of all of their previous relevant experience. Such judgments are labelled *critical thinking* and/or *critical reading*. Analytical reading and corresponding writing, when presented with instruction and discussion, are two means to the end of critical thinking.

Examining Implications

One responsibility that goes with analyzing an argument and accepting it as true is that of using the information. As reader or audience, this task is not easy since our feelings and habits sometimes stand in our way. Deciding on implications requires, in Piagetian terms, "accommodation"—the restructuring of mental maps of the world and the resulting changes in behavior. Understanding the implications of a paper or a stage performance may require a change of roles from audience to actor on the larger stage of life.

One way to be sure of implications and the need to adjust our actions is to read a variety of authors, who write about the same topic, and to compare different points of view. This procedure is Adler and Van Doren's fourth level of reading, called Syntopical Reading.

Snytopical Reading

The term *syntopical* denotes a pulling together of several authors' ideas to create a discussion of a single topic. Since authors do not often discuss the same point, it is up to the reader to change from audience to director and to select whose comments are appropriate at which point in the discussion. Syntopical reading, thus, is the eptiome of the reading-writing relationship; a student must read to have information to write, and the structure of the writing task gives purpose to and requires the student to understand what s/he reads.

Identifying the Topic

The first step of syntopical reading is to identify a general topic for the assignment. At the earliest stages, which may begin in second to ninth grade, students may select a topic based solely on interest. Thus, within a classroom a teacher may have students reading and writing (or otherwise sharing)

information about, for example, sports, detectives, and outer space as well as one individual who lives to know about cars. For the more advanced students, however, the topic(s) may be more closely related to the content of an academic discipline. Thus, syntopical reading might focus on such topics as the history of a town in its bicentennial year, or theories of history of the earth. The general topic should be discussed to share what knowledge (in some cases, mistaken knowledge) is already known by class members.

Locating Resources

Once a general topic has been identified, the second step is to locate possible sources of information about the topic. To accomplish this step, a student must know how to use the library, including how to use a card catalog, how to use an index of a book, and how to list sources for future reference. However, there is no reason why the search for information should be limited to books—magazines, films, filmstrips, records, tapes, and people may all be valuable references. A discussion of how to look for references and hands on instruction in a library are appropriate for each student who needs assistance. The act of identifying possible references, which requires inspectional reading, will allow more information to be accumulated and/or clarified. At this stage, it is not appropriate to write, but rather to proceed to the intermediate step of clarifying the questions that each individual would like to address in relation to the topic.

Clarifying the Question

In preparing for a performance, an actor reads a script first to get a general idea of the plot and theme. These preliminary steps are necessary to plan the way his role and the intonation and gesture for a particular line fit into the whole. For syntopical reading, locating reference—see the scope of a topic—is the same as the actor's preliminary steps. From these steps, both actor and author know roughly where they want to end up. The act of stating specific questions to be answered by each author is the act of deciding precisely what role the actor will play.

Specific questions focus each student's reading and writing. Knowing these questions before taking notes allows each reader to gather only relevant information and discard the rest as unsuitable for this purpose. Specific questions allow each writer to organize what s/he has to say before putting pencil to paper. Such a powerful tool cannot be expected to come easily to each student. Time spent discussing possible questions, discussing how a student developed a question, comparing the quality of questions, and developing criteria for determining quality (for example, number of authors who address that question in some way and centrality of the questions to the topic) will pay off in time saved locating the specific information and writing.

From this point, students can read, record pertinent information, organize the information in relation to the questions, and write. More sophisticated students appreciate instruction in defining a common set of terms for the various authors and ordering the writing around issues on which there is disagreement. These steps can be carried out with a minimum of difficulty once a student has developed the ability to select only material relevant to a specific question.

Defining Common Terms

It is not unusual that one author will choose to use a word differently than another or that different authors will use different words to mean the same thing. In the field of reading, for example, what one author may call *decoding*, another may call *reading*, and a third, *word attack* or *word study*. Each has a reason for choosing a specific term, but the activities have so much in common that a student must select among them or develop a new term to include all of the variations.

The task of defining common terms, which requires such thorough understanding, is not an easy one. Instead of giving a bit of what one author has to say and a bit of another's ideas, the ideas which are common must be integrated at the same time that the differences must be articulated. Again, instruction may be best carried out by means of group discussion of all the words found to represent similar ideas, objects, or relations which encourage students to quote their references or otherwise justify individual interpretations of specific words. These discussions may, in turn, lead to the identification of issues or areas where authors disagree.

Discussing Issues

Issues may be discovered through establishing common terms, through direct confrontation when one author describes his differences with another

author, or simply by finding that different authors have different answers to a student's question. When issues are discovered, it is the student's obligation to present all sides of the answer. Adler and Van Doren state that it is not necessarily the aim to declare one answer better than others; rather the aim is to understand the differences and to clarify the different perspectives on a common problem. To every important issue (birth control, the draft or nuclear proliferation, for example) there are different perspectives. The task of a literate adult is to define and analyze arguments on each side of an issue before taking a stand. Only when each argument is defined as clearly as possible can an individual interpret the arguments in light of personal values.

Summary

The stages in *How To Read A Book* have served many secondary teachers as a guide to sound instruction for a student who is beyond the stage of elementary reading. The argument of this paper is that understanding these stages may also be used to help a student write more clearly since reading and writing are complementary aspects of clear thinking. The focus of this paper has been on expository or non-fiction writing since that is the type used most frequently beyond the educational system.

The implication of this paper should not be to interpret that every youngster who graduates from high school should be required to complete one or more papers following the steps of analytical or syntopical reading; rather it is intended to say that there are steps which may guide a student—and even a teacher or professor to think, read and write more clearly regardless of his present level of performance.

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Rewriting Prewriting—Kevin C. McHugh

I know only one teacher who admits to being so boring that he occasionally puts himself to sleep in class. When he says this, he smiles, not broadly but impishly, perhaps with a humor borne of teaching a "dead" language, Latin. Me, I teach English, a living language I'm told. It felt pretty dead to me, though, about two years ago, as I stiffened my resolve for yet another go at the research paper, another tongue-lashing of, "Do you mean I *have* to have a bibliography?" or worse still, at the end of six weeks' instruction, "What do you mean... *bibliography?*" To be honest, I was bored. Of course, I knew that if *I* were bored, my students... Well, it would be even worse for them. I needed a change of pace, a shot of pedagogical adrenalin, an activity that would, if nothing else, inject life into a particularly blah Monday. And maybe, just maybe, I could invent something that would help my "kids" learn in the process. Oh, to be sure, I've since come to feel that I really wasn't just looking for pure escapism (though there *are* days!), that my gut instincts were really on the verge of an epiphany of sorts. And even though my experiment that Monday resulted from my own frustrations in dealing with the chronic inability of high school and college students to differentiate between the customary "run-to-the encyclopedia-and-copy-it-'report'" and the research paper, I found the activity I devised, and others like it, much more comprehensive in their application. I had discovered what the theoreticians called "prewriting."

I describe my change-up exercise in the November, 1980 *English Journal* (pp. 66-67). Basically, the activity involves presenting students with an inductive problem. Confronted by a strange attache case and its diverse contents, they must hypothesize about its owner: sex, age, occupation, hobbies, family life, vices, whatever. In so doing, they learn a number of things: the meaning of research and the differences between summary and a real thesis, between primary and secondary sources, and the proper use of those outside sources in papers that nevertheless "belonged" to them when they finished. The "bag game," as it has come to be called by my fellow Fellows at the Ohio Writing Project, *worked*. It helped considerably in teaching research. Nonetheless, I found its application much too limited to college-prep students, and I sensed that, if it worked, it needed disseminating on a broader scale. Quite inadvertently, but probably by instinct, I had stumbled on what, in one of my earlier methods classes, my teachers would have called a prewriting activity. But whatever it was, it worked. I enjoyed it, my class enjoyed it, and their writing demonstrated their involvement with the topic.

The *English Journal*, for whatever reason, chose to narrow the focus of my article to teachers of college-prep students and the research paper. This they accomplished by editing two short paragraphs from my already short contribution. Ironically, I have since come to regard the paragraphs they omitted as the most significant insofar as my own teaching was concerned. As originally written, the two paragraphs read:

"This grab-bag approach has other applications. With lower ability students, it affords (despite the jargon) a 'hands-on' composition topic suitable for either single or multi-paragraph development. I later presented the same assignment to my sophomore classes as detective work. (We had just finished reading a mystery story.) At the very least, it gave these youngsters ideas, something to write about, and an escape from the paralysis of the blank white page. The unknown person's hobbies, for instance, proved a suitable topic for a developmental paragraph with a longer paper whose thesis offered a more complete character sketch. The exercise allowed students with difficulties dealing with abstractions or generalizing, 'hard' details they could actually pick up, examine, arrange in groups that could later be paragraphs. It also encouraged effective prewriting discussion.

I suppose I felt most successful when I read the opening lines of a paper submitted by a usually reluctant and 'turned off' student: 'Did you know that English can be fun? I didn't until one day my teacher, Mr. McHugh, brought this bag into class. . . .'"

Since the "bag game" I have tried other similar activities. I needed no theoretical justification for the success I experienced. My "gut" told me I was right, and on reflection, I knew there was really little or no disagreement on the theory of prewriting, just too little premeditated practice on my part. I suppose I always assumed that a class discussion or some other warm-up would suffice, but these had seldom fixed the imaginations of my students, especially the so-called "slower" ones. Much to my surprise, for example, during a unit on

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monsters from the age of myth to today, when I had these same kids create and draw their own monsters in class (using materials provided by a delighted art teacher), and *then* describe them in paragraphs, they didn't view this as "kindergarten stuff." Sure, they joked about finger paints and nap time but they loved it. What's more their writing showed noticeable improvement, perhaps because they cared, perhaps because they were no longer floundering for something to say. In fact, this year, the same young man whose paper I quoted from earlier asked me if we would be doing anything like drawing monsters this year. We did.

I experimented in other ways. To help my advanced composition students distinguish between description/narration and exposition, and to help them include specific, concrete details in their writing, I resorted to slides of Victorian homes. These architectural delights spark even the dullest of imaginations with visions of bats and vampires. To the romantic, their spires and ornaments conjure *Gone with the Wind* images of crisp cretonne rustling about the ballrooms. First, I had my class describe, using concrete imagery, a house from the dozen or so I showed them in class. After they had finished, they revised their papers in editing groups and placed them in "storage" in their folders. Next, I had them characterize the owners or builders, based on their impressions of the buildings themselves. Once more they revised and edited and placed their papers on hold. Finally, about a week later (when they could review what they had written with greater objectivity), I instructed them to combine both papers, to marry their descriptive images and details to their expository information. I think we were all pleased and surprised by the wealth of detail and interest in the papers that resulted. I have continued to experiment with this exercise, by accompanying the slides with different sorts of mood music, from classical to rock. (It's amazing the mileage kids can get from Pachelbel's "Canon.")

Had I really *discovered* anything in all this? No. But I had learned some things that I might otherwise have taken for granted. As a result, I have included deliberate, premeditated prewriting as an integral part of my writing instructor's repertoire. And I'm a better teacher for it. But don't take my word for it. Let an 11th grade student of mine, Mike, tell you: "Instead of giving up I reached for the brass ring ... The words in my papers began to become more explicit and for the first time I liked what I had written."

Thanks, Mike, I needed that.

Appendix

CONFERENCE ON WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Rosalyn Dowling and E. Jane Porter
Conference Co-chairs
Ohio Department of Education
Office of Inservice Education

AGENDA

March 30, 1981

ELEMENTARY LEVEL: PRACTICAL APPLICATION

General Session Address

The Process of Writing—Christine San Jose, Blacksburg, Virginia Educational Consultant
Enriching the Context—Martha L. King, The Ohio State University

Concurrent Seminars—Experiences in Writing

- *Early Development into Writing: Observing and Responding* — Barbara S. Pettegrew and Christine C. Pappas, The Ohio State University Writing Project
- *Analyzing Categories of Writing Errors* — Susan Sowers, Harvard University
- *Evaluation of Writing* — Christine San Jose
- *The Development of Early Writing/Spelling Skills* — Jerry Zutell, The Ohio State University
- *Providing an Environment for Writing* — Barbara Friedberg, Martin Luther King, Jr. Lab School
- *Using Literature as a Springboard to Writing* — Mary Lou White, Wright State University

Banquet Address

The Skill of Writing — Jean Fritz, Award Winning Author

March 31, 1981

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY LEVELS: THEORY AND RESEARCH IN THE WRITING PROCESS

General Session Address

Plans That Guide Composition: A Developmental Perspective — Marlene Scardamalia, York University

Concurrent Sessions I

Elementary

- *Evaluation of Writing* — Christine San Jose
- *Reading into Writing* — John Stewig, University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee

Secondary

- *Research into Writing* — Frank Zidonis, The Ohio State University
- *The Ohio Writing Project* — Panel: Mary Hayes, Miami University; Nancy Kersell, Madeira City Schools; E. Anne Johnson, Princeton City Schools

Concurrent Sessions II

Elementary
- *Reading into Writing* — John Stewig
- *Oral Experience Leading to Writing* — Dorothy Strickland, Columbia University

Elementary and Secondary
- *Skills—Do They Exist?* — John Downing, University of Victoria

Secondary
- *The Reluctant Writer—Part I* — Keith Caldwell, San Francisco Bay Area Writing Project

Concurrent Sessions III

Elementary
- *Research on the Writing Process* — Susan Sowers
- *How Children Structure Story* — Victor Rental, The Ohio State University

Secondary
- *Revising and Editing: Getting It Right and Getting It Correct* — Paul Eschholz, University of Vermont
- *The Reluctant Writer—Part II* — Keith Caldwell

Banquet Address
Are We Romancing Writing? — Betty Jane Wagner, Director, National College Writing Project
Poetry Readings and Book Autographing — Arnold Adoff, Author

April 1, 1981

SECONDARY LEVEL: PRACTICAL APPLICATION

General Session Address
Writing in the Real World — Lee Odell, State University of New York-Albany

Concurrent Sessions I—Experiences in Writing
- *Consequential Writing Activities* — Marlene Scardamalia
- *Practical Evaluation* — Frank Zidonis
- *Solving the Case: A Prewriting Exercise* — Kevin McHugh, Finneytown Jr. and Sr. High School
- *Moving from Reading to Writing* — T. Stevenson Hansell, Wright State University
- *Learning to Write by Writing—Part I* — Betty Jane Wagner
- *Using Conferences to Teach Writing—Part I* — Paul Eschholz

Luncheon Address
The Joy of Poetry — Arnold Adoff, Poet/Anthologist

Concurrent Sessions II
- *Practical Evaluation* — Frank Zidonis
- *Solving the Case: A Prewriting Exercise* — Kevin McHugh
- *Moving from Reading to Writing* — T. Stevenson Hansell
- *Learning to Write by Writing—Part II* — Betty Jane Wagner
- *Using Conferences to Teach Writing—Part II* — Paul Eschholz

NOTES

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